The Magazine for Golden Age, Silver Age, & Bronze Age Collectors!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 77
April 2000

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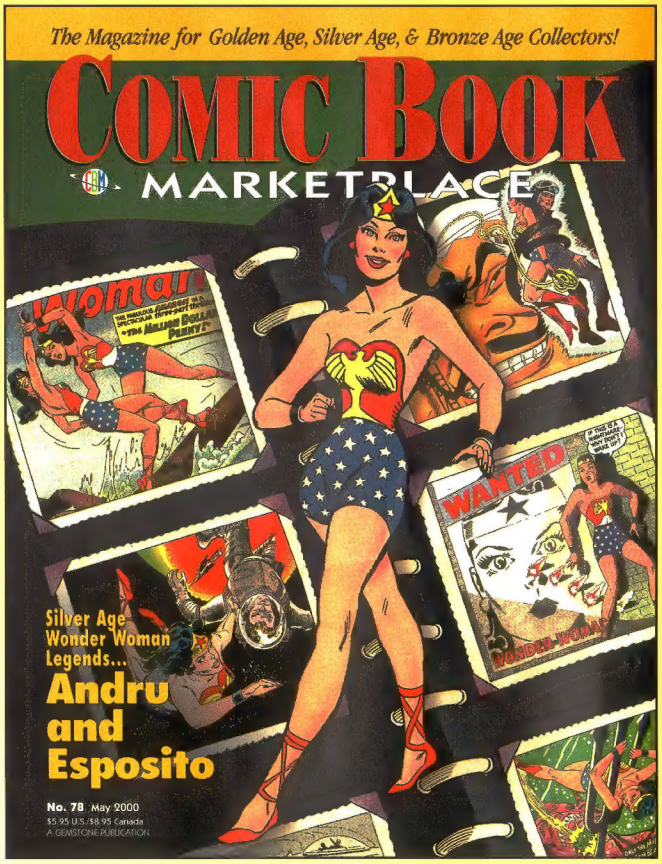

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Ross Andru & Mike Esposito

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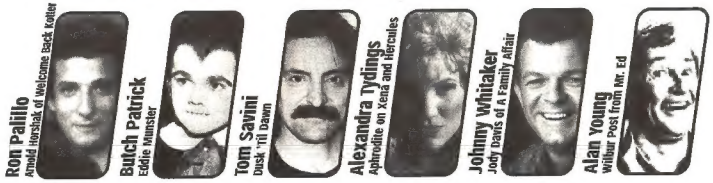

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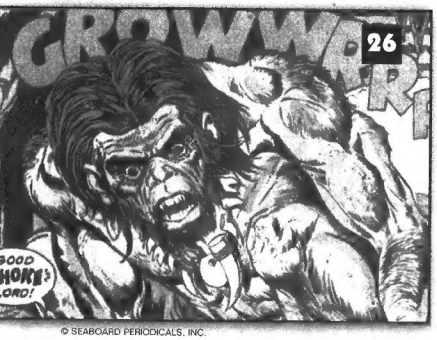
CBM CONTENTS

NUMBER 77 Apr. 2000



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FEATURES

Tales of the Supernatural
The strange tale of Shelly Moldoff and EC! by Roger Hill **18**

Shelly Speaks!
Sheldon Moldoff in his own words! **18**

From Brute to Vicki?
Martin Goodman's short-lived Atlas was Bronze Age magic! by J.C. Vaughn **26**

The Complete Atlas-Seaboard Cover Gallery
All 72 issues in full color! Courtesy the Michael Naiman collection **37**

Irv Novick
Spanning the history of the industry! Interview by John Coates **46**

Niatpac Levram!
Captain Marvel and the Good Humor Man! by Jeff Gelb **54**

Illustrator of Icons
A tribute to Irv Novick! by Pat S. Calhoun **80**

COLUMNS

Adventures Into Weird Words
Awesome Aliens Menacing Maidens! by Pat S. Calhoun **11**

Nolan's Notebook
Adventures of the Lovelorn! by Michelle Nolan **13**

Fandom Flashbacks
Super-Sensational Trash! Contributed by Shawn Hamilton **66**

Naiman Report
"Qualified" VF/NM 9.0? by Michael Naiman **68**

CBM MarketWatch & Market Reports
A sample of marketplace indicator sales! **68**

Volume 2 • Number 77
April 2000
A Gemstone Publication

DEPARTMENTS

Letter from the Editor 4

Marketplace Mail 6

Back Issues 74

Subscriptions 75

Advertising Info.....78

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Pen to Paper

The dreaded flu bug has struck low the editor (and usual author) of the opening remarks for *CBM*, so the powers that be have asked that I set pen to paper in his stead. Since Gary's topic-in-progress was the state of grading in the hobby, I thought I'd take the opportunity to share my views about this continuing discussion... especially regarding the new grading service. This topic is bound to prick reaction both positive and negative. My approach is to determine how to make the process better and a boon to the hobby and hobbyist. Obviously, such a task is impossible in 500 words, but here are some general thoughts.

As I view grading and grading services, it comes down to confidence and consistency. "Confidence" that the book I purchase at a certain grade (that may ultimately determine its "value"), may be sold with "confidence" at the same grade. Consistency reflects that what is a VF from a source in California is a VF from a source in Georgia.

I feel that the hobby has matured enough to support, as part of its spectrum, a grading service. Professionally executed, such a service can lend confidence to a purchase or sale. Such confidence must be reflected in the consistency and accuracy of grading. Therein lies the rub, because grading, like truth, beauty and contact lenses, is in the eye of the beholder. Although constricted by certain objective guidelines, grading is ultimately a subjective exercise.

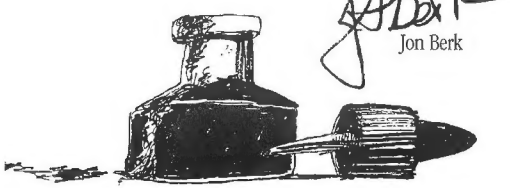
To minimize the "subjectivity" of the process and to "blend" different grading perceptions, non-profit grading services offered to the major auction houses in the past have been performed by committee wherein a "consensus" grade is given by eliminating the high and low grades and averaging the remaining grades. (This procedure is not all that different than scoring at gymnastics or ice skating where individuals viewing the same performance may assign divergent scores.) Consequently, a grading service in order to instill confidence must ultimately rely on a consensus grade as opposed to a single grader. From the limited surveys I have heard as to the new grading service, while the grades may be slightly higher than the submitter would have graded, the books were "consistently" graded. That is an important start.

The fear is that grading standards may erode and be diluted by the standard of one person; that "consistency" will erode once that individual is replaced. The erosion of "consistency" is the harbinger of the erosion of "confidence." It is a difficult process. These concerns should not be minimized or ignored. For people new to the hobby (and not so new to the hobby) the greatest fears are grading (hence value) and restoration (hence value). If the hobby is to prosper, these fears must be addressed by injecting confidence into the buying and selling process. I do not think this goal can be questioned, only the execution of the process to achieve that goal. Accordingly, constructive feed-back as to the execution of the service should be communicated so to enhance the ultimate service. Additionally, I believe any service that offers a restoration detection service is, well, worth its weight in gold (or silver). For the hobby to grow and prosper, I applaud any process that may inject confidence and consistency into the buying and selling of comic books. We should join together and constructively aid the process of providing confidence, consistency and accuracy to the grading services. With constructive input, grading services, if properly executed, will inure to the benefit of all.

That's my take... Gary will return next month with his own learned views on this topic.

Thanks for reading,

Jon Berk



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Golden Age

Legends of Daniel Boone
3 VF- River City $225.00
Lone Ranger,The
37 VF/NM File Copy $65.00
41 NM- File Copy $65.00
42 NM- File Copy $50.00
43 NM File Copy $50.00
44 NM File Copy $50.00
46 VF/NM File Copy $45.00
48 NM File Copy $50.00
52 VF/NM File Copy $45.00
58 NM File Copy $50.00
60 VF/NM File Copy $45.00
61 VF/NM File Copy $45.00
65 NM File Copy $50.00
69 NM File Copy $50.00
70 VF/NM File Copy $45.00
Lovers' Lane
1 FVF $50.00
3 VG/F Super Glossy $15.00
5 VG+ Super Glossy $12.00
6 FVF Super Glossy $21.00
7 FVF Super Glossy $21.00
8 FVF $21.00
10 Fine $14.00
20 VG+ $6.00
21 Fine- $8.00
22 VG $6.00
Marvel Mystery Comics
12 FVF (minor rest) $1050.00
20 VF+ San Francisco $4,000.00
Marvel Tales
126 VF River City $185.00
Mary Marvel Comics
1 VG $325.00
7 Fine- White pages $675.00
30 GVG Classic Cover $135.00
Mister District Attorney
1 VG- white pages $175.00
More Fun Comics
39 VG++ $675.00
42 FVF $700.00
52 VF- White pages $40,000.00
54 VF glossy $9,400.00
58 VF White pages $3,200.00
62 FVF $2,000.00
97 Good CFO $40.00
101 GVG $1,000.00
Motion Picture Comics
113 F/Fine+ River City $35.00
Mr. District Attorney
39 Fine+ River City $50.00
41 VF++ River City $90.00
Mystery Men Comics
7 GVG white pages $325.00
13 Good+ white pages $75.00
Mystic Comics (1st series)
5 VG+ cfo $225.00
New Adventure
22 VG- $600.00
31 Good White pages $320.00
New Book of Comics
2 GVG $1,100.00
On the Spot
1 VG- $50.00
Phantom Lady
19 VG/F $495.00
21 Fine- $425.00
22 VG- $240.00
Planet Comics
3 Good+ CFO $150.00
25 Fine- River City $325.00
31 VF+ $650.00
45 Good- $90.00
45 VG+ $150.00
46 VG/F $135.00
47 GVG $75.00
48 VG/F $135.00
49 Fine- $150.00
50 Fine $160.00
51 Fine/Fine+ $175.00

Planet Comics
55 VG/F $130.00
60 F/F+ $175.00
69 VF/NM Glossy $400.00
69 Good+ Glossy $50.00
70 VF+ Glossy $400.00
72 Good+ Glossy $50.00
73 F/F+ Glossy $125.00
Plastic Man
14 Fine $130.00
Police Comics
112 VF-/VF Mile High $375.00
Popular Comics
44 Good $30.00
48 Fine $90.00
Popular Teen-Agers,Love
14 Fine L.B. Cole cover $70.00
23 VG/F L.B. Cole cover $35.00
Popular Teen-Agers,Romances
9 Fine L.B. Cole cover $60.00
Prison Break
4 VF/NM $200.00
Prize Western
94 VF+ River City $75.00
Punch
12 FVF Classic cover $2,800.00
Purple Claw,The
3 Fine River City $75.00
Race for the Moon
1 VF- River City $50.00
Range Romances
1 GVG $35.00
Rangers Comics
36 Fine+ $60.00
41 Fine- $50.00
Saint,The
3 VG+ $70.00
Science Comics
3 VG White pages $375.00
Select Detective
1 GVG $25.00
Sensation Comics
76 Good+ $42.00
Sensational Police Cases
2 VG+ $25.00
Seven Seas
4 VF++ $1,250.00
Sheena
1 Good CFO $100.00
Single Series
8 Good- $25.00
Slam Bang Comics
4 Good white pages $65.00
Smash Comics
71 Good- white pages $15.00
Spellbound
8 Good- $18.00
Spy Smasher
7 VF/NM Rockford $750.00
Spy Smashers
1 Good $20.00
Star Spangled Comics
43 VG/F white pages $110.00
53 VG- Simon & Kirby $72.00
104 Good+ $45.00
122 Fine+ $150.00
Strange Worlds
1 Good+ $75.00
2 Good- $35.00
Stuntman Comics
1 VG+ $200.00
Superboy
1 VG white pages $1,350.00
Superman
4 VG+ White pages $1,200.00
6 VG- $510.00
9 VG/F $645.00
14 VG/F $645.00
33 Good+ CFO $50.00
44 VG $140.00

Superman
53 Fine- $640.00
64 VF- Mohawk Valley $500.00
74 GVG $72.00
106 VF- Origin issue $250.00
Target Comics
v7 #7VG-/VG CFO $15.00
Thrilling Comics
9 VG $120.00
22 GVG $85.00
37 NM $400.00
39 NM $400.00
Tom Corbett Space Cadet
11 FVF River City $35.00
Tom Mix
3 VF/NM $200.00
4 VF+ $175.00
9 VF- $100.00
Tomahawk
10 Fine- River City $75.00
13 FVF River City $90.00
Tomb of Terror
3 Good+ $30.00
Top Love Stories
10 F/Fine+ L.B. Cole $50.00
12 Fine- L.B. Cole $45.00
3 (#1)Fine+ Mile High $295.00
True to Life Romances
11 VG+ LB Cole cover $35.00
6 VG- L.B. Cole cover $30.00
9 VF/NM Cole cover $175.00
14 VG/F Cole cover $50.00
15 VG- L.B. Cole cover $35.00
Two-Gun Kid
1 Good $100.00
Uncanny Tales
39 VF+ River City $105.00
USA Comics
2 FVF White pages $780.00
War Comics
4 VF- River City $50.00
Web of Mystery
2 F/Fine+ River City $75.00
Weird Fantasy
14 (#2)VF/NM $900.00
15 (#3)VF+ $500.00
16 (#4)VF- $275.00
11 VF- $150.00
18 VF White Mountain $250.00
Weird Science
5 VF- $200.00
20 Fine $100.00
15 (#4) VF- $275.00
Weird Science-Fantasy
24 VG/F $65.00
25 Fine $90.00
Western Kid
17 Fine $20.00
Western Outlaws
1 Fair-Good $30.00
Western Roundup
4 VF+ River City $50.00
Whiz Comics
31 VF+ $300.00
34 VG+ $85.00
40 VF/VF+ $225.00
45 GVG $45.00
47 VF+ $175.00

Whiz Comics
53 NM- $175.00
54 VF- $110.00
57 VF- $110.00
Wonder Comics
11 VG/F $200.00
16 Fine $275.00
Wonder Woman
11 VF/NM $800.00
15 F/G $65.00
18 Good+ $90.00
23 VG am. ct/glue $110.00
30 VF- $400.00
44 Fine $135.00
Wonderworld Comics
10 GVG $310.00
11 Good+ $135.00
18 GVG $120.00
19 VG/F $190.00
Young Allies
13 VF $600.00
Zip Comics
10 VG $80.00

NEW ARRIVALS

Action Comics
179 VG+ $75.00
Adventure Comics
76 VF+ $1,350.00
103 VF- $1,400.00
104 VG $200.00
106 VG/F $175.00
108 VG+ $150.00
All American Comics
16 VG $17,500.00
Atomic Thunderbolt
1 Fine- $145.00
Black Cat Comics
2 VF/NM File $265.00
3 VF/NM File $225.00
5 VF+ File $200.00
20 VF+ File $150.00
22 NM- File $150.00
23 NM File $175.00
25 NM- File $175.00
26 VF/NM File $130.00
27 NM- File $175.00
Blonde Phantom
22 VG/F $180.00
Captain Marvel Adventures
18 VG+ $400.00
110 VF- $85.00
Captain Marvel Jr. Comics
18 NM- $550.00
46 Fine+ $70.00
84 VF $95.00
93 F/F+ $55.00
97 FVF $75.00
103 VF $95.00
117 VG- $25.00
Catman Comics
30 VF+ $975.00
Crown Comics
4 F/F+ $150.00

Dick Tracy
26 Fine File $40.00
29 FVF File $75.00
30 VF- File $75.00
31 VF++ File $90.00
32 VF++ File $90.00
34 NM- File $135.00
35 NM File $125.00
36 VF++ File $110.00
Exciting Comics
26 VF $500.00
Fight Comics
1 Fine- $725.00
Four Color
20 VF/NM File $350.00
Green Hornet Comics
28 VF File $225.00
29 VF/VF+ File $325.00
30 VF+ File $225.00
31 Fine File $140.00
Green Lantern
7 FVF $950.00
Human Torch,The
35 VG+ $195.00
Li'l Abner Comics
64 NM File $150.00
65 NM File $150.00
66 NM File $135.00
67 VF File $80.00
68 Fine File $48.00
69 VF/NM File $110.00
Major Victory Comics
3 Fine+ $125.00
Marvel Family,The
28 VF- $95.00
Master Comics
32 Fine+ $225.00
102 VF/NM $110.00
108 VG+ $21.00
110 VF/NM $100.00
126 VG $30.00
Mystery Comics
1 Fine+ $300.00
Phantom Lady,The
17 Fine $2,100.00
18 FVF $675.00
Planet Comics
17 F/F+ $400.00
20 Fine $350.00
Plastic Man
11 VF/VF+ $300.00
Rangers Comics
3 Fine+ $250.00
Sensation Comics
63 FVF $175.00
Space Ace
2 VF- $300.00
Sparkman Comics
1 VG $50.00
Sub-Mariner Comics
27 Good $95.00
30 VG+ $210.00
Superboy
1 NM- $10,000.00
Top Spot Comics
1 Fine- $70.00

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Long live DC Comics

Thoroughly enjoyed CBM #70 (the Batman issue), I am a big fan of Batman (from the Golden Age to the present, even though the no man's land storyline is a bit far-fetched!). My favourite Batman cover of all time is Batman #5.

How about more articles on Wonder Woman and More Fun Comics à la CBM #69, issue by issue and the scarcity of those issues?

Regarding the market reports... don't you think that the prices on comic books are a bit high? You can't find any good comics at affordable prices anymore! Most of the good comic books are on eBay and they're driving the prices up beyond the regular comic collector. What's your take on it?

That's it for now. Keep up the good work and long live DC Comics!

John F. El-Hajjeh, Ontario, Canada

Welcome back

Been reading your magazine for about a year now, and am an active collector again after a 10-year absence from buying. Fortunately during the hiatus I kept my collection. I am pleased to say that this has been a pleasurable return for me to a hobby started 25 years prior. Some thoughts on my return to collecting and/or comments on what I've read in your mag and heard from others:

1) Sellers, please stop complaining if you can't get your price. Don't say that the market is underpricing you. Plain and simple, the market price for your item is what someone is willing to pay for it. That's all that it is. If no one will pay your price, then it's not worth your price. Don't complain; as a buyer, I don't always get the price I want. If I want it bad enough, I pay for it. If not, I don't; if everyone else feels the same way, and is not willing to pay, then you don't sell; and the only evidence of the "worth" of your comic is the price sticker on the bag.

2) Also to sellers... I have found a couple of pretty decent sources the last two years to obtain desirable back issues. Why do I feel they are decent? No, it's not that I get a fair price, although that's obviously important. It's because, we have chatted about comics, their history, present and future a countless number of times. Their passions for their chosen profession tells me that these are good dealers. Yes, they need to make a profit, but they do so by building loyalty and making it a fun trip to their stores. For those of you that don't, you don't get my business. Know your industry and what's on your racks.

To underscore this, I mention that a few months ago, I somehow missed getting my copy of CBM at my favorite store. I went to another dealer a few miles a way, and asked if they carried the mag. He said he'd check, turned around to go look, then stopped and asked me, "Comic Book Marketplace; is that a Marvel or DC?" Well, at least, he knew the names of two comic book companies.

3) The outstanding research and content in your articles rekindles my fondness of youth in the late '60s-early '70s as I evolved from a passionate reader of Richie Rich and Super Goof to the superheroes of DC then Marvel (although even in those preteen years, Stan Lee's arrogance bugged me; it wasn't until the Spidey newspaper strip that I was really hooked on the arachnid.)

I loved going to Mary's Dairy Bar to get new issues, along with baseball cards. That passion was for reading and looking at the pictures. The enjoyment of simply reading the latest adventure is perhaps an innocence lost forever once we get into the world of collecting.

It begs a question: Why do we buy issues now (new or back issues), is it because of the pleasure of the content, or simply to say that you own it? Does the fact that I now (proudly) have a copy of Amazing Fantasy #15 give me more enjoyment than a 12¢ or 15¢ Gold Key that I purchased out of my 25¢ allowance as an eight-year-old? I can't answer that. How about any of you?

Well, I've blathered on far too long. Thanks for listening to the thoughts of one type of collector who enjoys your publication quite a bit. I do wonder if there are others out there that are similar to me. Ciao,

Sam Capuano, via E-mail

Superior Sub Service

Your prompt response to my letter regarding a problem with my subscription to Comic Book Marketplace was great. I appreciate you taking the time to write back explaining what the problem was and how it was resolved. I am now up to date with CBM *(Continued on page 9)*

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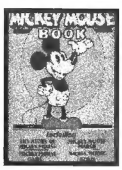

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back issues and am impressed with your commitment to customer service and satisfaction. I am looking forward to future issues of my CBM subscription.

Bryan Mydland, Alberta, Canada

All the credit for Superior Sub Service goes to Subscription Manager, Amanda Kitzmiller. Without her sterling efforts and commitment, there'd be a lot more snafus with the monthly mailing. Only problem is that her ankles and wrists are getting chafed (where the shackles hold her to the computer desk) and she's getting pale and losing weight (I'm guessing from the steady diet of bread and water). At any rate, CBM subscribers need not worry… their subs will continue to be handled in the organized and timely fashion they have been… and Ms. Kitzmiller gets all the credit!

Stunned in Amsterdam

Over the last year I've picked up CBM at my local comic book shop here in Amsterdam. And let me say I'm stunned by the high quality of the articles in general and the 'look' of the magazine. The November issue is my favourite so far. I just love the stuff on Matt Baker and the pre-Code horror stories.

I could have lived without the Beatles' Yellow Submarine… it's a "crap-o cartoon" and should not have been featured in CBM!

Any chance of a lengthy feature of Matt Baker in the future? I have several of the comics that feature his superb art but know little about the man myself. Keep up the great work!

Ger Rijff, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Coo-Coo for Carl

Recently acquired a comic book entitled Coo-Coo (not Nedor Publications Coo Coo Comics from 1942) Volume 1, #1 and published by Bob Edwards Publishing Company in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1932, one year before Funnies On Parade #nn (1933-Eastern Color) hit the newsstands.

Coo-Coo measures 8 1/4" x 11" and contains 29 pages of cartoons and jokes. The editor is listed as E. A. Sumner and the Art Director was none other than Carl Barks, famous for his work with Walt Disney characters such as Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge. It bears a 10¢ cover price.

The black/white/red cover features artwork by Carl Barks as well as seven signed pieces in the book's interior. The entire comic book is black and white with the exception of the covers and the centerfold, which is also black/white/red.

Is this the first comic book cover and interior artwork of Carl Barks? Without question, it certainly precedes both Four Color #9 and Large Feature Comic #7 which are listed as Barks' first art and scripts in Overstreet's Comic Book Price Guide, both of which are from 1942.

Arguably, Coo-Coo #1 may be the first Golden Age comic book as it precedes Funnies on Parade #nn by a full year. At the very least, it should be considered a precursor to comics' Golden Age, bridging the gap between the Platinum Age and Golden Age of Comics.

What a great discovery for the new millennium!

John Mlachnik, Minnesota

Fox Mystery and 30¢ Dell Giant

Responding to Michelle's article in the October 1999 issue of CBM, I have the Romeo Tubbs #27 which is dated December 1952 and published by Green Publishing Co., Carey Ave., Wilkes-Barre, PA. It indeed contains Romeo Tubbs stories that start on the inside front cover (like a Fox Comic). How the title went from Fox to this company and back to Fox for issue #28 (I have this issue also) is a mystery. I have the Pedro comic also but I wasn't able to locate it in my storeroom (maybe in the spring).

I can also confirm the existence of Dinky Duck #10 published by St. Johns (September 1954).

I also recently bought a coverless St. Johns Romance giant that I assumed to be Romance & Confession Stories #9. Rebound were a romance book, two Mopsy comics, and one issue of a teenage redheaded girl comic (only one issue of this comic but the name escapes me—I have the issue not rebound). There was no Joe Kubert art in my book. *(Continued on page 74)*

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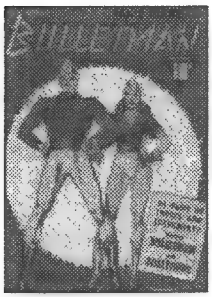

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Awesome Aliens Menacing Maidens!

By Pat S. Calhoun

The ultimate statement of 1940s pulp science fiction art was the holy trinity of man, woman, and monster. Whether it was aliens invading Earth or humans out in space encountering unknown life forms, the three would act out their roles: the male—usually heroic, the female—lovely and underdressed, and the creatures—who got nicknamed BEMs, which stands for bug-eyed monsters. In addition to reducing space opera to its essence, these covers also made a philosophical point—at least to the guys of yesterday and today—that the aliens, however inhuman, had something in common with the home boys: they both seemed to like the ladies. Thus it became—most often—a futuristic "St. George and the Dragon" with the knight, the princess, and the magical beast. This tradition was upheld in the science fiction comics as well—most ably by publishers who also produced pulp SF.

The two green BEMs on the cover of *Startling Comics* #48 (November 1947) may not be the most terrifying monstrosities ever imagined, but the whole scene is so well constructed that it rates as a classic. It's beautiful work by Alex Schomburg in his airbrush "Xela" mode. This isn't really a science-fiction comic of the kind the 1950s would bring; it's an anthology with Lance Lewis Space Detective as cover feature.

The first strip inside is "Tygra"—a jungle heroine who gained super strength by drinking a new vitamin formula. In this ish she's fighting a mad doctor who transplants human brains into apes and vice versa. It's a solid nine-pager. Then Lance Lewis battles an invasion of lizard-men that's mildly engaging through some very familiar gyrations.

The superhero entry, The Fighting Yank, is unsatisfying because you can only get so excited about a "hero" who's always getting help at the end from the ghost of his Revolutionary War ancestor. But that's followed by some snazzy teen humor as Jefferson Jones takes part in a high-school production of Romeo and Juliet. The art on this charmer is by humor and romance specialist Al Hartley.

Don Davis, the secret agent strip at the end is pure filler, but it still adds up to a worthwhile comic from Better, who also published the pulp mag, *Startling Stories*.

Avon was not as heavily into pulps as Better, but they had one of the first digest lines, and by the early 1950s they had published pulps, paperbacks, and comics—all with a strong commitment to SF/fantasy. *Strange Worlds* #2 (April 1951) has plenty of verve. The Gene Fawcette cover comes across clearly; it's got an accompanying three-page illustrated text story inside—an effort to be different that doesn't quite succeed but an effort nonetheless.

The opening yarn features Crom the Barbarian in "The Giant From Beyond." Crom was a Conan-clone who could have been a contender… In this, his third and last adventure (he debuted in *Out Of This World*, a one-shot that preceded *Strange Worlds*) he battles enemies led by a giant warrior. It's an adequate if unspectacular story that could have used a little more magic, but the character had potential.

The middle tale is a muddle… about ancient Atlantis, redeemed only by Wally Wood's art. The last strip, "Dara of the Vikings," is a typically "doofus" yarn of two yanks who discover a race of Vikings living as they did a thousand years ago in an unexplored part of Greenland. It's pleasant reading despite the preposterous concept. All in all, it's not a brilliant comic, but one that was always trying to entertain and achieved enough to sufficiently reward a reader.

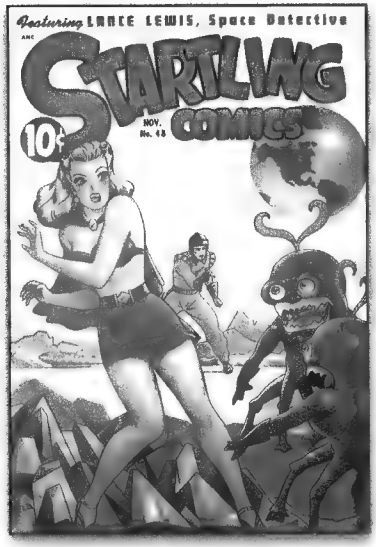
Planet Comics #70 (Summer 1953) has an emphatic "BEM blasting away with his ray-gun as he clutches a hapless space-woman in his hairy tentacle" cover and contains some reasonably good reprints inside. A "Lost World" episode, illustrated by the adept Lily Renee, starts things off looking well with a typically bizarre chapter in the war waged by future humans trying to regain Earth from the conquering Volta Men.

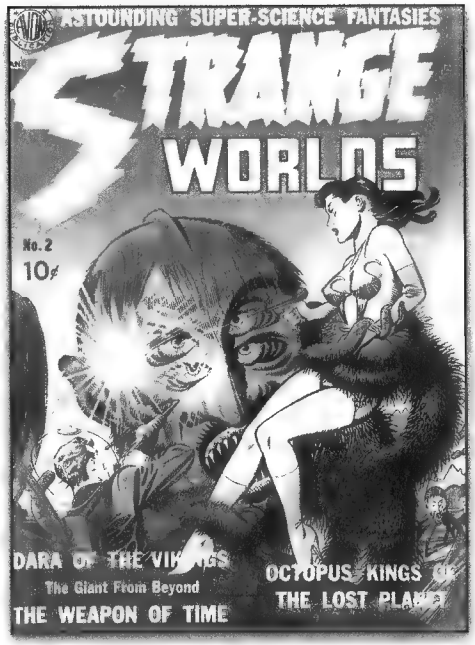
Then Space Patrol gal Gale Allen takes on some giant spiders and the crazy cultists who feed them human sacrifices. They capture the Patrolwoman but are overwhelmed by her blonde beauty and declare her to be Sun-Hair, the Queen who legend predicted would come and lead them to glory… This helps Gale get the best of them—'nuff said.

Next there's six enthusiastic pages of "Star Pirate" signed and dated 1945 by a young Murphy Anderson. This is the yarn described by the cryptic cover blurb "space-wrecked women and plastic men." After that, the Space Rangers

Since this cover is reproduced in black-and-white, it should be noted that the menaced maiden on the cover of Planet Comics #70 (Sum 1953) is a redhead… rounding out the triad of Schomburg's blonde and Fawcette's brunette.

Avon's comic book effort peaked early with issues like **Strange Worlds #2** (Apr 1951), but they didn't maintain their quality... perhaps because Avon (like Fawcett) was shifting their focus to their money making line of paperback books





In the late '40s, Schomburg produced a magnificent string of airbrushed sci-fi covers for **Better's Startling & Wonder...** and #48 (Nov 1947) is a prime example

close out the book with a romp involving seven female robots and a pirate queen. It's typical Fiction House. They also did this kind of stuff with less pictures in their pulp mag, *Planet Stories*. In fact a house ad urges readers to "thrill and chill to the blaze of high adventure in the Universe of Future Centuries... ALL for 25¢ in every exciting new issue..."

Perhaps by now it's obvious that comic books with awesome aliens menacing maidens on the cover don't always contain the most sophisticated sci-fi. But that doesn't stop them from being a lot of fun. Unfortunately, after 1953 the pulps were phasing out fast, and comic books of the space opera genre dwindled as well... but collectors can still strap on their rocket packs and blast off to weird worlds of promise and peril.

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Adventures of the Lovelorn

ACG's long-running love affair with Romance Comics

By Michelle Nolan

By the end of the 1950s, what were the romance comics titles with the most issues?

You don't get the Prize—the quickest pun ever in a Michelle column!—if you said Crestwood's *Young Romance*.

The answer comes from the company sometimes known as The Little Giant, as comics historian Michael Vance has dubbed the American Comics Group.

ACG, best known for the horror/fantasy titles *Adventures Into The Unknown* and *Forbidden Worlds*, published only 40 comics in 1959. ACG's other two titles that year were *Confessions of the Lovelorn* and *My Romantic Adventures*.

By the end of 1959—a year in which the romance genre's only other publishers were DC, Marvel, Charlton, and Prize—*Confessions of the Lovelorn* had run 109 issues and *My Romantic Adventures* had lasted 107 issues, beginning with slightly different titles. *Confessions of the Lovelorn* lasted until #114 (June 1960), but *My Romantic Adventures* endured four more years through #138 (March 1964).

That's an astounding run for both titles, when one considers that Prize's *Young Romance*—the first true romance comic book—ran 102 issues through 1959 (#102 was Volume 12, Number 6, November 1959). DC's longest-running romance title (among five being published in 1959) was *Girls' Love Stories*, which ran 67 issues through that year. Marvel's *Love Romances* had reached #84 (beginning with #5 in 1949).

ACG, of course, is well known for trying a variety of titles and formats for more than 20 years under the guidance of Richard Hughes, one of the most prolific writers and editors the comics industry has ever known.

By the time ACG expired in 1967, the company had published 984 comic books (plus a few less-than-well-documented promotional and give-away comics), as painstakingly indexed issue-by-issue by the noted comics historian Dan Stevenson. Not many of these comics contained outstanding stories or art as measured by traditional standards, yet they remain among the most readable and amusing of their era, which stretches from the Golden Age, through the Atom Age, and well into the waning years of the Silver Age.

In both his fantasy and romance titles, Hughes was noted for his endless supply of tales of lovable losers of both sexes, of young women hoping their prince would come, and of just plain little folks who finally came up big in this cold, hard world. He recycled plots endlessly, yet had the knack for making the stories seem fresh and fun.

Collectors tend to either love ACG's style or feel it is too funky for words. I loved reading these comics in the 1950s and '60s and never missed an issue of the fantasy titles. For some reason, however, the romance titles did not seem to be distributed as well.

Hughes actually began publishing what amounted to gothic romance comics in his pre-Code horror/weird menace titles; his *Adventures Into The Unknown* was the first regularly published horror comic, beginning in 1948. The majority of the stories dealt with supernatural menaces to lad and lassie, although many others did not.

ACG was not noted for knockoffs or copies. The company tended toward a degree of originality in its titles and characters, the most noteworthy of which was *Herbie the Fat Fury*. However, Hughes could not be blamed for jumping on the romance bandwagon in 1949 along with two dozen other companies. Sales of Simon & Kirby's *Young Romance* and other early romance titles from Fox and Marvel doubtless convinced him.

Interestingly, ACG was less affected by the "Love Glut" of 1950 than other significant publishers. It is true that the company's third romance title, the nicely named *Search for Love*, lasted only two issues (March and May 1950) before being kissed off. However, both *Lovelorn* and *Romantic Adventures* (as the titles were

The MAGAZINE THAT DARES TELL THE TRUTH!
Confessions of the LOVELORN
10¢
The SHOCKING TRUTH!
A WOMAN'S AWFUL PROBLEM
"HEART of a DRUNKARD!"
Other TOP ROMANCES IN THIS ISSUE-
"Imitation of LOVE"
"That LITTLE SPARK"
How TO GET YOURSELF TALKED ABOUT!

On the cover of Confessions of the Lovelorn #53 (Sep/Oct 1954), publisher R.E. Hughes exploited the topic of female alcoholism to promote sales

known during their first five years) continued regular bi-monthly publication in 1950.

Nor did ACG quickly abandon the 52-page format, unlike many other smaller companies in the late 1940s and early 1950s. *Lovelorn* was 52 pages through #26 (June 1952) and *Romantic Adventures* through #23 (July 1952). Although most 52-page comics of the early 1950s did not hesitate to advertise that fact on the covers, ACG trumpeted that fact more than anyone else. "Giant 52-page Size! Buy No Less!" was bannered at the top of many ACG covers in 1950 and 1951, although the "Buy No Less"! half of the message was abandoned a few months before the conversion to 36 pages in 1952.

It's easy to find a few inexpensive examples of the ACG romance titles at any major convention or from major dealers. However, it's a real challenge trying to complete the set of 254 issues.

There usually was an air of unreality to the ACG romance titles, whether the theme was amusing or amazing. Unlike other companies, though, ACG tended to take the high road with regard to romance, much like DC… except usually in a less bittersweet way.

Until a brief period in 1954, just before the advent of the Comics Code, sleaze and suggestiveness were virtually non-existent on ACG's romances covers and stories. Nor were frequent tears shed by the women on the covers of ACG's romance titles; plot, not emotion, was stressed.

Unlike almost any other romance comics of the period, several of the early ACG covers stressed romantic humor. The first such *Lovelorn* cover was #15 (July 1951), when a befuddled amusement park worker spots a couple lost in an embrace coming out of the tunnel of love (remember, in those days, most people were much more circumspect about public displays of affection).

Other *Lovelorn* humor covers: Issue #18 (October 1951), with a couple kissing while construction workers laugh and a policeman frowns at their car having demolished a men-at-work sign; Issue #19, with a couple kissing in a museum while a guide points to a painting and mutters, "now, here is a really romantic picture!"; Issue #20, with a couple kissing behind a teacher's back as the class smiles while he says "I've never seen any of my mathematics classes so interested in my lecture before!" And so on.

The romantic humor covers didn't last long, though, much as DC's charming Batman/Superman humor covers for *World's Finest* of the same period soon gave way to more traditional dangers and story teasers.

It's fascinating to note that just before the advent of the Comics Code, *Lovelorn* switched its title to *Confessions of the Lovelorn* with #52 (August 1954) and began a four-issue pre-Code run of sleazy cover features: "I Sold My Baby" in #52, "Heart of a Drunkard" in #53, "The Wrong Side of the Tracks" in #54 and "I Take What I Want!" in #55. The latter two covers were slightly less sensational, but still far from typical of ACG.

This was an utterly astonishing switch for this company, although the Comics Code soon prevented this type of story. The cover of *Confessions of the Lovelorn* #53, with a woman drinking alone in a bar, is truly startling, especially coming only two or three years after humorous romance titles from the same company! I can only imagine what Dr. Wertham must have though of such covers! Or, perhaps, of what a teenage girl's parents might have felt when their daughter came home with a cover like "Heart of a Drunkard." The mind boggles!

At the same time, there were two similar sleazy issues of *Romantic Adventures* after the title changed to *My Romantic Adventures* with #49 (September 1954). The cover of #49, drawn by Ogden Whitney, featured "Jailbird's Romance" with the teaser, "Has a murderess a heart? The most sensational confession of outlaw love ever published!"

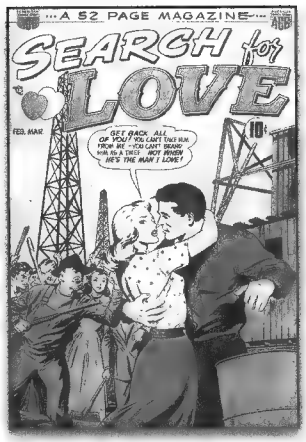
My Romantic Adventures #50 (October/November 1954) has one of the most startling covers in comics history, also

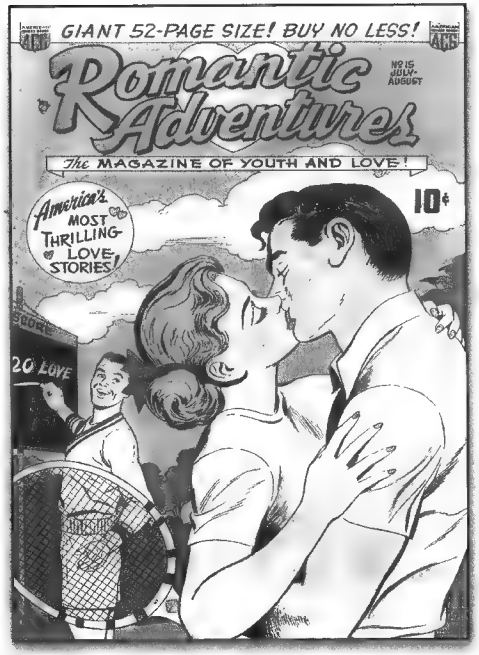
TRUE LOVE CONFESSIONS!
ACG
NO 49
SEPT.
MY Romantic ADVENTURES
10¢
YOU DARE TALK ABOUT LOVE···WITH THE KILLER'S BRAND ON YOU FOR ALL THE WORLD TO SEE?
HAS A MURDERESS A HEART? READ THE BOMBSHELL ANSWER IN "JAILBIRD'S ROMANCE"—
The MOST SENSATIONAL CONFESSION OF OUTLAW LOVE EVER PUBLISHED!
52

Rough and risque by ACG standards, the 12-page story "Jailbird's Romance" (My Romantic Adventures #49, Sep 1954) was beautifully rendered by the legendary Ogden Whitney

drawn by Whitney, featuring an imprisoned woman with a jaundiced yellow face illustrating "Love of a Lunatic!" In the lower right corner, a couple kisses as the woman asks herself, "How can I tell him that I'm going insane?"

Confessions of the Lovelorn bannered "The Magazine That Dares Tell the Truth" beginning with #52, and *My Romantic Adventures* used the cover lure line "True Love Confessions!" starting with #50. These two teasers remained throughout their runs, long after the Comics Code forced a return to more typical comic book romances.





Perhaps the rarest ACG romance title, Search For Love (#2, Feb/Mar 1950, last issue) was yet another victim of the '50s "love glut"

At any rate, *Confessions of the Lovelorn* #52 and 53 and *My Romantic Adventures* #49 and 50 have become cult favorites. "Jailbird's Romance" has an amazingly grim ending for a romance comic. "Love of a Lunatic," on the other hand, has a most happy conclusion, as does "Heart of a Drunkard." I have not read "I Sold My Baby."

ACG published nearly 1,000 stories in its 254 romance comics, so there's room to touch on only a few here. They are nearly all entertaining if you can suspend your disbelief enough. The plots are among the most improbable in all romance comics, yet many of the characters seem surprisingly real and human.

The early issues of *Romantic Adventures* and *Lovelorn* are sheer, unadulterated fun. Most of the stories are far from routine, dealing with exotic subjects. Others deal with outlandish plots dependent on coincidences, but they're still a lot of fun.

For example, here are the themes of *Romantic Adventures* #5 (November/December 1949): "Love Call of the Wild" (outdoors romance); "The Lure of the Bright Lights" (the life of an actress); "Love is for the Living" (psychological romantic mystery); and "The Handcuffed Heart" (a policewoman finds love).

In *Romantic Adventures* #32 (April 1953) "Campus Kisses" tells the tale of a college heartthrob who dates a star athlete, finds a way to convince his stern professor to keep the athlete academically eligible, then falls in love with the professor and saves him from a burning bus! It's total hokum, of course, but fun to read.

Unlike many other romance comics (which dealt either with intense emotions or social issues) ACG's two titles stressed almost nothing but plot. During the brief period in 1954 when ACG did deal with social issues, they presented them in a manner so grim they almost seemed like different comics from a different company.

Once the Comics Code came in, sleaze was totally out, of course. In its place, Hughes substituted stories of whimsy along with straighter romantic tales.

Typical of these stories was one involving an often-used DC Comics plot—that of the young girl who meets her future love as a child and overcomes all obstacles to find happiness with him as a young adult. Such a tale was "Romance of a Nobody" in *Romantic Adventures* #59 (September 1955), in which a poor, homely little girl eventually finds the courage to claim her man.

In "Love is a Beautiful Thing" in *Romantic Adventures* #74 (February 1957)—a takeoff on the popular song of the period "Love is a Many-Splendored Thing"—a homely woman has plastic surgery to make her beautiful, then realizes that even though she is still the same person inside, the men who find her fascinating might not if they knew her secret. The story ends when she gets reacquainted with the doctor who performed the surgery, who loves her for herself.

Even though the story is, of course, highly improbable, there is much psychological food for thought here about what makes anyone truly beautiful.

Richard Hughes, in fact, often used what seemed like a silly, improbable story to deal with a psychological truism. His wisdom comes across in the stories. As a child, I actually found many of them inspirational and still do, in a different way.

Some of the women in ACG's stories were years ahead of their time too. In *Romantic Adventures* #106 (October 1959), with a symbolic caveman and cavewoman cover—the love interest aggressively spurns her

One of Richard E. Hughes' many sight gags appeared on the cover of Romantic Adventures #15 (Jul/Aug 1951), a pre-Code 52-pager

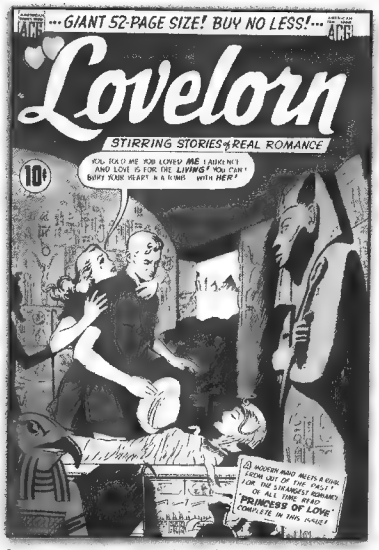
Can you help Michelle with her ACG research?

She still needs information on a few of the 254 romance issues. If you have any of the following, please contact her via Comic Book Marketplace.

Thanks, Editor

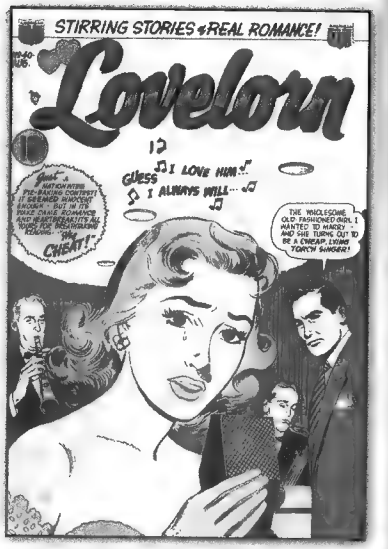
Confessions of the Lovelorn #50, 51, 52, 69, 73, 75, 79, 83, and 97

My Romantic Adventures #33, 79, 90, 93, 103, 109, 111, 113, 120, 122, and 130



Lovelorn #5 (Apr/May 1950); searching for the Egyptian "Princess of Love"

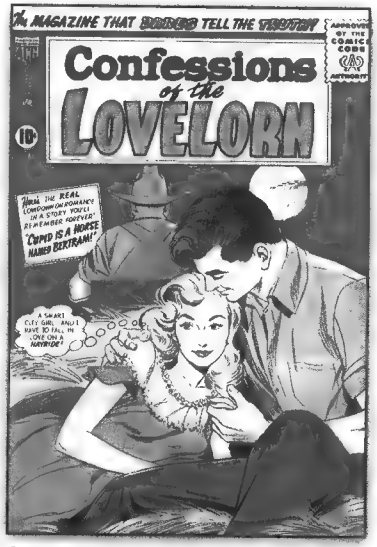
Lovelorn #31 (Nov 1952); note Hughes' pun in lower right-hand corner of cover


STIRRING STORIES of REAL ROMANCE!
Lovelorn
10¢
I LOVE HIM!
I ALWAYS WILL...
THE WHOLESOME, OLD FASHIONED GIRL I WANTED TO MARRY - AND SHE TURNS OUT TO BE A CHEAP, LYING TORCH SINGER!

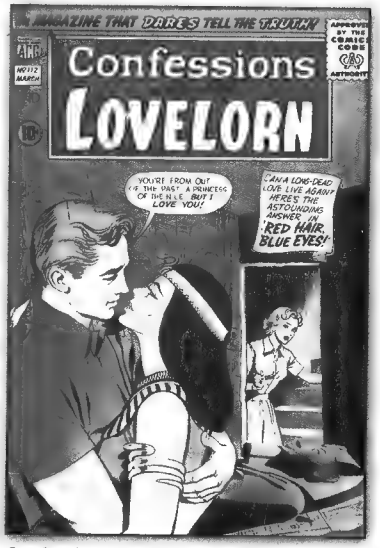
Lovelorn #40 (Aug 1953); "...she turns out to be a cheap, lying torch singer!"

MAGAZINE THAT DARES TELL THE TRUTH!
Confessions of the LOVELORN
10¢
"Thudding fists and a woman's heartstrings! Here's the most amazing romance you've ever read - "LOVE ON THE ROPES!"
8 9 10 YER OUT!
OKAY, DARLING, I LOVE YOU! YOU'LL ALWAYS BE MY CHAMP!

Confessions of the Lovelorn #58 (Apr 1955); "Heartlines & Bylines" by Lazarus


MAGAZINE THAT DARES TELL THE TRUTH!
Confessions of the LOVELORN
10¢
"CUPID IS A HORSE" HANKS BERTRAM!
A SMART CITY GIRL SHOULD HAVE TO FALL IN LOVE ON A HAYRIDE!

Confessions of the Lovelorn #86 (Oct 1957); Baseball classic "25 Men and Me!"


MAGAZINE THAT DARES TELL THE TRUTH!
Confessions of the LOVELORN
10¢
YOU'RE FROM OUT OF THIS WORLD! A PRINCESS OF THE N.I.L.E. BUT I LOVE YOU!
ANNA LONG-DEAD LOVE LIVES AGAIN! HERE'S THE ASTOUNDING ANSWER IN "RED HAIR, BLUE EYES!"

Confessions of the Lovelorn #112 (Mar 1960); Forte classic "Red Hair, Blue Eyes!"

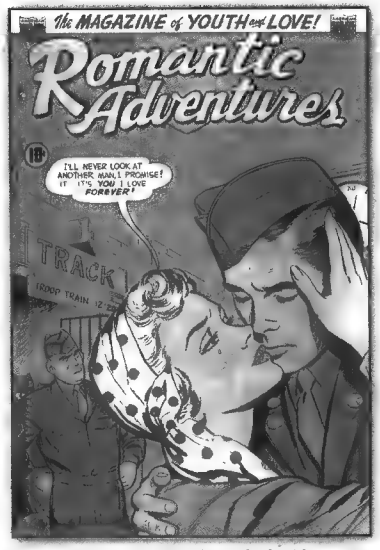
boyfriend's requests that she "dumb down" herself. She joins a circus as a daredevil animal trainer, then sees her once-and-future love save her from an overly amorous circus strongman. Together, they realize their mutual courage is a bond.

There is a similar plot in "Miss Hercules Finds a Man" in *Romantic Adventures* #115 (November/December 1960). This tongue-in-cheek story of a strongwoman is so outrageous I can't imagine the other romance publishers of the time even considering it. ACG's romance comics often had that element of gentle satire, as though Hughes were poking fun at "serious" romance titles.

ACG's romance run finally ended when the hysterical Herbie the Fat Fury, who was spawned in *Forbidden Worlds* #73 in 1958, finally received his own title (issue #1 dated April/May 1964) to replace *My Romantic Adventures* on the publishing schedule (the last issue was #138, March 1964). Likewise, the successful fantasy title *Unknown Worlds* (August 1960) replaced

GIANT 52-PAGE SIZE! BUY NO LESS!
Romantic Adventures
The MAGAZINE OF YOUTH AND LOVE!
10¢
NO, DON'T SAY GOOD BYE! JUST LET ME REMEMBER YOU AS YOU ARE NOW... THE MAN I LOVED!
In this issue KNIGHT of LOVE The GUILTY HEART MEANT for an OTHER and other ROMANTIC HEADLINERS!

Romantic Adventures #11 (Nov/Dec 1950) cover by Ogden Whitney


The MAGAZINE of YOUTH and LOVE!
Romantic Adventures
I'LL NEVER LOOK AT ANOTHER MAN, I PROMISE! IF IT'S YOU I LOVE FOREVER!
TRACK

Romantic Adv. #27 (Nov 1952); Nurse cheesecake story... "A Greater Love"

The MAGAZINE of YOUTH and LOVE!
Romantic Adventures
10¢
YOU'RE A JEALOUS OLD HAG! AFRAID OF THE YOUTH AND BEAUTY I'VE GOT AND YOU HAVEN'T!
HEARTLESS LITTLE DEMON!

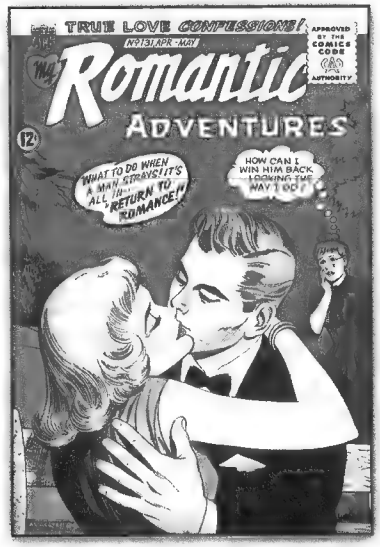
Romantic Adv. #43 (Mar 1954); blonde bombshell classic "Heartless Little Demon!"

TRUE LOVE CONFESSIONS!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
My Romantic ADVENTURES
10¢
SHE NEVER THOUGHT SHE COULD LOVE A DOCTOR! NOT WHEN SHE WAS LOOKING FOR A KNIGHT on a WHITE CHARGER!
OH, DOCTOR MONE?
DOCTOR ADAMS

My Romantic Adv. #95 (Nov 1958); Hughes' "Bring Home a Nice Girl, Danny"

TRUE LOVE CONFESSIONS!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
My Romantic ADVENTURES
10¢
SURE, YOU LOVE ME AND I'M CRAZY ABOUT YOU BUT IT WON'T WORK! WE'VE GOT OUR CAREERS & BANK
SHE CAME TO GREENWICH VILLAGE WITH A DREAM IN HER HEART! A DREAM THAT BECAME A NIGHTMARE! DON... MISS FLIGHT from LOVE!

My Rom. Adv. #100 (Apr 1959); "You've Got to Think You're Beautiful!" by Whitney


TRUE LOVE CONFESSIONS!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
My Romantic ADVENTURES
12¢
WHAT TO DO WHEN A MAN STRAYS! IT'S ALL IN... RETURN TO ROMANCE!
HOW CAN I WIN HIM BACK, LOOKING THE WAY I DO?

My Romance Adv. #131 (Apr/May 1963); O. Whitney classic "Return to Romance!"

Confessions of the Lovelorn (last issue #114, June 1960).

In retrospect, it's surprising that ACG's romance comics lasted as long as they did, especially with their outrageously plotted stories. Most of the dozen or so romance titles on sale during the 1960s deals with more realistic concepts. Thankfully, however, ACG was not around to contribute to the even more outrageous romance period-piece plots set during the tumultuous 1967-73 period, when love comics were on their last legs.

So, if you're looking for comic book love, consider at least a flirtation with ACG for a lighthearted good time.

Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the 1940s through the 1960s and on the Board of Directors of the American Association of Comichook Collectors (AACC). In real life, Michelle works as a freelance journalist.

Shelly Speaks!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Roger Hill initially interviewed Shelly Moldoff on May 25, 1990, shortly after that, he met with Shelly at a comic convention in Kansas City. The following is an edited excerpt from that interview.

ROGER HILL: Where and when were you born?
SHELLY MOLDOFF: In Manhattan, New York on April 14, 1920.

ROGER: When did you first develop interests in becoming an artist?
SHELLY: I was about... I'd say ten-years-old, maybe a little older and I was drawing with chalk on the sidewalks... literally, using the old phrase, drawing on the sidewalks of New York. I remember drawing characters like Popeye, and others.

Interestingly enough, a fellow came over and said "that's not bad, would you like to learn how to draw cartoons?" I said yes. He was a few years older than me and he lived in my building there in the Bronx. He went to the James Monroe High School where he was the class artist and he drew for the school paper. So he started to show me how to make cartoons. Every couple of weeks or so I'd go up to his apartment and show him what I was doing. He was very kind and he would help me a little. Then he moved away and as it happened, I didn't see him again for years. That fellow happened to be Bernard Baily.

Everyone is always talking about the Golden Age of comic books... it was the golden age for the publishers all right, but it was the darkest of ages for the artists and the writers.

—SHELLY MOLDOFF

The article and interview you are about to read is, I believe, an important part of comics history that has been overlooked for many years now. As a long-time EC fan, historian, and collector, I've always had an interest in learning more about those artists and writers who passed through the hallowed doorway of 225 Lafayette Street in New York City between the years of 1946 to 1956. That address, of course, was the original location of the *All-American* Comics line (affiliated with Harry Donenfeld's Superman-DC line) spearheaded by comic book entrepreneur Max Gaines. In 1945, Max sold out his interest to Donenfeld for $500,000, retired for two weeks, then came back to start his own EC—Educational Comic Company. After Max's death in a boating accident on Lake Placid in August 1947, his son, William M. Gaines took over the failing business and eventually changed the name to Entertaining Comics.

As history has documented, the young Bill Gaines made radical changes to the comics line-up that his father had started. He eliminated such titles as *Animal Fables, Dandy Comics,* and *Picture Stories from the Bible*, and replaced them with a new selection of adventure, crime, and romance titles such as *Gunfighter, Crime Patrol,* and *Modern Love*. But this did not happen overnight, or before Gaines had hired artist/writer Al Feldstein. Feldstein, a veteran of the Jerry Iger comic art shop (or should I say "sweatshop") and a man of many ideas, would eventually become editor at EC and prove himself to be a formidable force in the editorial direction that EC would pursue between 1948 to 1956.

Tales of the Supernat

BY ROGER HILL

THIS MAGAZINE IS HAUNTED © FAWCETT

ROGER: Wow... that's amazing!

SHELLY: Yeah. Bernard Baily. Then when I was about 17 or 18-years-old I started to do some work for National Comics.

ROGER: Before we get to National I wanted to ask you about other artists whose work had an early influence on you or your style. You already mentioned that you used to draw Popeye on the sidewalks, so I would guess that means you liked Elsie Segar's work a lot.

SHELLY: Yes... I loved Popeye. I used to love the fights he had with Bluto.

ROGER: Were there any other newspaper strips that you enjoyed regularly back then?

SHELLY: I liked the Katzenjammer Kids... and Jiggs and Maggie. Felix the Cat was another one. The artist who drew Felix was Pat Sullivan and he was just terrific in those days. I was never a Krazy Kat fan. Herriman was a good cartoonist but I guess maybe he was just a little too sophisticated for me.

ROGER: How did you first discover comic books?

SHELLY: Well, comic books were happening around the time that I was getting out of high school. If you wanted to be a cartoonist at that time, the only field was newspapers. So I went down and I met Willard Mullin and I introduced myself. He was the sports cartoonist for the *World Telegram*. This was a Hearst paper. At that time I wanted to be a sports cartoonist. I loved sports. So I'd go to Willard Mullin about once every couple of months. I'd show him my drawings and I'd sit there and watch him work. I thought he was a fantastic cartoonist.

ROGER: He was one of the greats... no doubt about that.

SHELLY: They would have drawing contests in the newspapers and they used to have rodeos there at Madison Square Garden. So they would have contests on drawing horses and rodeo scenes. I went to a lot of these things and I won a lot of contests. You know, you'd win free tickets to the rodeo. They wrote some articles about me in the *New York Journal American*. Things like that.

ROGER: And this was before you got out of high school?

SHELLY: Yes, I was still in high school, but as I said at that time you pointed toward newspapers because that seemed to be the only field. So when I graduated from high school it was right around the time that comic books were coming in. I graduated in 1937, and in 1938, comic books really started to come alive. ▸▸

Tales of the **Supernatural!**

Johnny Craig was another talented veteran who, as early as 1943, had worked with Max Gaines' *All-American* comics editor Sheldon Mayer (They worked on the newspaper strip *Scribbly*). In 1946, after a hitch in the Army, Craig returned to work for M.C. Gaines in the EC art department. Craig, like Feldstein, had good ideas about writing and drawing and most of all, had an enthusiastic attitude about working at EC and helping it evolve into something successful.

Eventually Feldstein and Craig would work very closely with each other while sharing the same office space (and practically the same desk) at EC. Through the crucial years of change at EC (1947 to 1950), these two very talented gentlemen would frequently participate in three-way conferences with publisher Bill Gaines. Because of these conferences and their creative input, Bill Gaines was given much guidance which no doubt helped him move toward the EC New Trend titles conversion into horror, science-fiction, and war during late 1949 and into 1950.

What's amazing is that while many comic book historians (including myself) have already written extensively about EC and researched and interviewed those who we felt were major players in the history of EC Comics, there now appears to be someone of great importance and knowledge who almost slipped through our "historical sensors." That someone would be Sheldon "Shelly" Moldoff; one of the great Golden Age artists who brought his unique talents to the comic book industry in 1939 when it was still in its infancy.

While Moldoff was ghosting for Bob Kane he drew this splash for "Robin Dies at Dawn" (Batman #156, Jun 1963)

Here was a man who started out assisting Bob Kane on the Batman feature but soon graduated to working on his own. He drew the adventures of "Cliff Cornwall, Secret Agent" for *Action Comics* and provided a number of memorable covers for such DC/All-American titles as *Adventure Comics, All-Star, Flash Comics, Green Lantern, More Fun* and others. Oddity or filler pages became a specialty of his as well, and his contributions to the Hawkman series in *Flash Comics* remain fondly remembered by many fans and collectors in the field today. Shelly—as he prefers to be called—also spent 15 years (1953-1967) ghosting most of Bob Kane's Batman comic book work for DC.

Aside from Shelly Moldoff's many accomplishments in the comics field over these many years, he was usually considered an elusive enigma to those of us who are deeply rooted in DC nostalgia and lore. He was, for various reasons, a man who initially did not attend comic book conventions or have much contact with the fans. Therefore, no one had ever been able to interview Moldoff about those early years at EC. These were the transition years in which M.C. Gaines died and Bill Gaines took over. From 1947 to 1949 Shelly drew the action-packed adventures of the superheroine known as Moon Girl. Moon Girl had been the brain-child of the senior Gaines who, after assigning Gardner Fox to write the feature, called Moldoff in to visualize her. Capitalizing on his previous success with superheroes created for his All-American line, Moon Girl was Max Gaines' first return to the genre since selling out to DC in 1945.

HAWKMAN, BATMAN, ROBIN, DETECTIVE COMICS, FLASH COMICS © DC.

MEET THE ARTIST
—SHELDON MOLDOFF, ONE OF THE FINEST COMIC-STRIP ARTISTS IN THE COUNTRY, IS NATIONALLY KNOWN FOR HIS ACCURATE DETAIL AND EXCITING PICTURES..
HELLO READERS! IN MORE THAN TEN YEARS OF DRAWING COMICS FOR MANY OF THE LEADING PUBLISHERS, I CAN SAY THAT MOON GIRL IS THE MOST FASCINATING ADVENTURE-STRIP CHARACTER I HAVE EVER ILLUSTRATED! IF YOU FOLLOW THE ADVENTURES OF MOON GIRL, I CAN PROMISE PLENTY OF SURPRISING THRILLS AND ADVENTURE AHEAD FOR YOU...

One of the earliest EC biographies, "Meet the Artist—Sheldon Moldoff" (Moon Girl #6, Mar 1949) was drawn by Shelly, himself. Two of the stories produced for TOTS had already seen print

Moon Girl—introduced as "a woman of sensational strength, super-human speed and endurance and surpassing loveliness"—received the power of "ten ordinary men" from her "magic moonstone necklace." Accompanied usually by her athletic companion "Prince Mengu," Moon Girl's adventures began in *Moon Girl and The Prince* #1, dated Fall 1947. With issue #2, the title was changed to just *Moon Girl*, even though the prince still appeared regularly. The title was again changed with the seventh issue, dated May/June 1949, when it became *Moon Girl Fights Crime*. The last issue, #8, dated Summer 1949 was the last work that Shelly Moldoff did for EC Publications.

Since the run of *Moon Girl* comics have never been reprinted in the ongoing (and excellent) series of EC reprint volumes published by Russ Cochran/Gemstone Publishing, collectors have not had easy access to these stories. EC comic prices being what they are today has kept a lot of fans away from enjoying and scrutinizing these early pre-Trend titles. The New Trend horror, science-fiction, crime, and war titles have always received the majority of attention, and deservedly so.

Yet on the other hand, the pre-Trends show us the early roots of growth that developed into the New Trend. As this article will show, Shelly Moldoff played an important part in that development. During the past 30 years, I had often thought about how interesting it would be to meet Shelly Moldoff and what kind of questions I would ask him. I finally got my chance about a decade ago at a Kansas City comic convention in early 1990. To tell the truth, I had not known whether or not Shelly was still alive then. I had never heard anything about him. Unbeknownst to me, the Kansas City show was Shelly's first comic convention, and his first exposure to many of the comic fans who had followed his career.

As it turned out, that first convention was an enjoyable eye-opener for Shelly who now loves to do the convention circuit and meet his fans and rekindle old friendships with other writers and artists he worked with years ago. I found Shelly Moldoff to be an easy person to meet and talk with. I would even go as far to say that Shelly is one of the most straightforward, truthful fellows I've ever had the privilege of talking to.

Shelly was eager to talk about his long career of working in the comics and when I questioned him about his EC years, he began telling me a most intriguing story. It is a story that I still find most interesting and I believe holds some historical importance to the history of comics.

But before I get into that I should mention that

Before he became an EC artist, George Evans drew this house ad for Fawcett's title This Magazine is Haunted

Well, that [comic books] opened up a whole new field to cartoonists. And you know, for many, many years the newspaper cartoonists looked down on the comic book artists. You were sort of like a stepchild to them. I remember how difficult it was to get into the National Cartoonists Society. In those days it was pretty much just made up of illustrators and newspaper cartoonists.

I did get into the organization eventually but it was very difficult. I was a member for many years. As I said, they did look down on the comic book artists. The crazy thing is that through the years, it is now the comic books that are worth much, much, much more money than the newspaper strips.

ROGER: What led you to the comic book field... and was there anyone in particular who gave you that first big break?

SHELLY: Not really... I just peddled around trying to sell stuff, and then (through a friend of mine) Bob Kane called me. He asked if I could help him with some work. So I went over to see him. He also lived in the Bronx at that time. I started lettering his pages and inking in his backgrounds.

ROGER: This must have been his Batman feature...

SHELLY: Right! The Batman! And once I started working for him, then I went down and met Sheldon Mayer who was with the All-American Comics Group. M.C. Gaines was there of course. Max Gaines kind of took a shine to me. He used to say "hiya kid," and things like that. I didn't get any work there at first, but I kept coming back with my samples, trying to sell things and ideas. Finally Sheldon Mayer gave me a strip to do. It was called "Cliff Cornwall—Secret Agent," which ran in *Action Comics* at the time.

This was shortly after Siegel and Shuster's Superman had made his debut. Gaines had an interest in National Comics and he had his own offices located down on Lafayette Street in New York. M.C. Gaines would be down there in the morning... and then in the afternoons go uptown to National Comics. He had an interest in National and was on good terms with Jack Liebowitz and Harry Donenfeld. And I'd say out of all of them, M.C. Gaines seemed to know more about the comics field than any of the others.

I penciled and inked from the very beginning. I sold them a couple of covers too... I did some covers for *More Fun Comics*. I had met Vincent Sullivan and Whit Ellsworth while I was trying to sell work there. Then one day I walked up to National Comics and Vince Sullivan was suddenly the editor there and he said, "I'll give you some work." He gave me oddity type pages to do. For instance... a sports page, or a Ripley's page, or a movie star page. You know, stuff

like that. So I started doing those type of oddity pages while I was doing the Cliff Cornwall feature for Mayer and Gaines.

ROGER: Wasn't Sheldon Mayer the editor of all the comic titles that M.C. Gaines was publishing at that time?

SHELLY: Yes, he was in charge. He was also drawing Scribbly at the time... which was a character patterned after himself and ran in the comic books.

ROGER: Right. The strip about a boy who wanted to be a cartoonist. It was a regular feature in All-American Comics for several years...

SHELLY: Yes, all of these things were happening very closely to one another. Bob Kane's Batman, Siegel and Shuster's Superman. Then I left Bob Kane. As soon as I started getting work on my own, I stopped doing his lettering and background inking.

ROGER: Did Kane get upset when you left?

SHELLY: No, not really. I was on very good terms with his family and his father. His father liked me a lot. His father felt that Bob and I should go into our own publishing business. He said, "You fellows have the talent and the creativity."

I was constantly dreaming up ideas and trying to sell different ideas and characters. I wasn't as accomplished then as an artist and therefore couldn't always get the point across. You know what I mean?

The comics were a young industry that just started with a lot of young artists who suddenly now had to fill a void. Publications were starting by the hundreds. The field suddenly began to come alive because Superman and Batman was starting to sell big and they were beginning to make a lot of money. The artist doesn't know that. He has no idea that they're selling hundreds of thousands of issues every month.

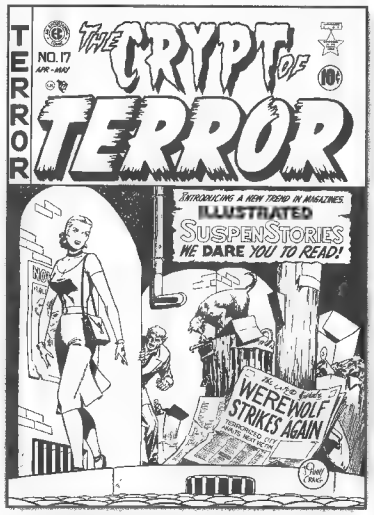
ROGER: Do you think the comic publishers of that time suppressed circulation information so that the artists and writers would not ask for more money?

SHELLY: I don't know if it was deliberate or not. You know, it wasn't the computer age then, like ▸▸

Tales of the **Supernatural!**

my first question to Mr. Moldoff was not about EC. For many years now I've been doing research on the horror artists of the 1950s. It is one of my book projects, and so my first question to Shelly was whether or not he had ever done much horror work in the comics field. To my surprise, Shelly began to tell me about his years of working for Fawcett Publications where he sold them on the idea of doing a horror title called *This Magazine Is Haunted*. This revelation came as a total shock to me. *This Magazine Is Haunted* just happens to be a run of comics that I started collecting back in 1964 and completed just last year.

Naturally, discussing the horror comics led us right into talking about EC comics and this is where Shelly began telling me about his days of working for both the senior and junior Gaines. I originally had not wanted to report on this story until I had time to research all the details and facts involved. And the truth is, there's still some unresolved details that I don't fully understand yet. I do consider it somewhat of a new and important chapter in the ongoing process of understanding and documenting the events that made the Entertaining Comics Group one of the most popular and respected creative comic book publishers in the industry.



Johnny Craig's wonderful and moody cover for one of EC's first horror comics... Crypt of Terror #17 (#1, Apr/May 1950, formerly Crime Patrol)

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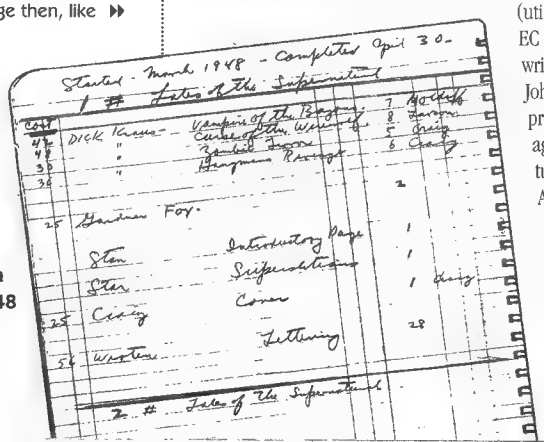
Way back at the 1990 Kansas City Comic Con, Shelly Moldoff told me a story about producing a horror comic book called *Tales Of The Supernatural* for Bill Gaines in 1948; two years before the New Trend horror books came out. He explained to me that in March of 1948 he had discussed with Gaines the idea of putting together a horror comic for EC to publish. This time though, Shelly wanted a percentage of the sales, but only if the book sold well enough to show a profit. An agreement was made and a contract was drawn up for both parties to sign. Moldoff then hired writers and artists to help produce a cover, four interior stories, a two-page text story, an introductory page, and a "superstitions" page. On top of that, he also hired Jim and Margaret Wroten to letter the whole thing. The Wrotens had been lettering for Max Gaines during the All-American years, and continued to letter everything for Bill Gaines as well (utilizing the Leroy Lettering Process). Other EC alumnae involved with the project were writers Dick Kraus and Gardner Fox. Artists Johnny Craig, Howard Larsen, and Shelly provided the art. Moldoff basically packaged the whole thing for Bill Gaines and turned in *Tales Of The Supernatural* on April 30th, 1948.

As Shelly tells it, Gaines stuck it in a drawer and never used it. Two years later, during one of his periodic newsstand stops, Shelly discovered the first issues of



Shelly's journal lists expenses for TOTS. Dick Kraus wrote four stories that Moldoff, Larsen, and Craig illustrated; Fox wrote two text "filler" stories; Stan Moldoff (Shelly's brother) wrote an introductory page and a "Superstitions" page; Craig drew the cover; and Jim & Margaret Wroten lettered... all from Mar to Apr 1948

Crypt of Terror and *Vault of Horror* comics and immediately proceeded to Gaines' office where he confronted him about it. Since Shelly had made the initial suggestion of doing a horror comic to Gaines, and since they had a signed contract between them, he felt he had some money coming to him, or at least a percentage of the sales. Gaines told him he couldn't pay percentages and besides, the new EC horror comics were different from what Moldoff and he had originally discussed and agreed to. The title of *Tales of the Supernatural* had not been used. None of the original stories he produced for *TOTS* had been used in *Crypt* or *Vault*, so there was nothing he could do.

Following the meeting with Gaines, Moldoff proceeded to the offices of the lawyer who had drawn up the contract between he and Gaines on the *TOTS* deal. This lawyer, who happened to also be the same lawyer that EC and National DC Comics used for their business dealings, told Shelly that he should just forget about it or face a potential black-balling within the industry. Eventually Gaines settled with Moldoff for $250, and the whole affair was basically forgotten. Naturally, to this day, Shelly holds ill-feelings about the way the situation was handled.

After I had first heard Shelly's story at the Kansas City Comic Con, I decided I needed to follow up with some additional research on the matter. I also knew that I'd have to interview Shelly more extensively on the phone later on. Since this episode over the *TOTS* comic had taken place so many years ago, I was afraid that Shelly wouldn't be able to remember some of the details relevant to the contents of *TOTS*. I was soon to learn my fears were unfounded. I was also very elated to find out that Shelly had kept a journal (personal log) of every commercial art job he ever did. Shelly's memory of these events seemed to be pretty clear too, so that was also a big plus.

Shelly's journal documents all of his art jobs from the 1930s through the present. It contains nearly six decades of information about Moldoff's contributions to the industry, and supports his story of having produced the first issue of a new horror comic book for Bill Gaines.

Before we get too far into the telling of these events surrounding the creation and publication of *Tales of the Supernatural*, I think a few things should be mentioned (although most *CBM*ers probably know this already). In January of 1947 the Avon Publishing Company issued a comic book titled *Eerie* #1. This is considered to be the first true horror comic published in America. In 1948 the American Comics Group (ACG) issued the first issue of *Adventures Into The Unknown*. This title, which continued for 19 years, is considered to be the first continuing series of a horror comic in America. In May 1949, Marvel/Timely/Atlas converted *Sub-Mariner Comics* to *Amazing Mysteries* with issue #32; this was the beginning of a horror trend at Atlas. So William M. Gaines did not invent the horror comic… and neither did Shelly Moldoff.

But in March of 1948, Shelly Moldoff struck an agreement with Gaines to put together a horror comic that Gaines could publish under the EC colophon. Gaines, who had only inherited his father's failing comic company a few months before, was still in the process of trying to figure out what direction he would take with the company. He had hopes of putting the company back in the black and making his mother proud of him.

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It turns out Johnny Craig's (and EC's) first horror story ("Zombie Terror," Moon Girl #5, Fall 1948) was written by Dick Kraus not Craig… contrary to what EC historians theorized for many years

it is now, where everyone knows everything. The practice did go on for a long time. We were getting six or seven dollars a page, and they're selling 500 to 600 thousand or more of these comics. I think it was just the way things were at the time.

ROGER: So what happened next?

SHELLY: Well, then Bob Kane got very busy and he couldn't continue to do Clip Carson, which was another adventure series that he created shortly after Batman had first appeared. So Sheldon Mayer gave me Clip Carson. Bob was very busy with Batman. They were gearing up to put out Batman in his own quarterly title so Bob got another assistant. I can't remember who this second assistant was. It's interesting, I think I was the first, then later when I started working with him again in the 1950s, I became the assistant who worked with him the longest. Because I stayed with him for about 15 years. Nobody ever came close to that.

ROGER: Back to M.C. Gaines for a minute… what kind of a guy was he?

SHELLY: I liked him a lot and I knew him very well. He was a nice guy but he was pretty tough at times too. I saw him argue with his writers and artists sometimes. He was a strong individual.

ROGER: Gaines' role in getting Siegel and Shuster's Superman accepted into *Action* #1 has pretty much been written into all the history books, and I wanted to ask you if you had any additional inside information or details to add to that story. After all, you were there during those early years.

SHELLY: Well, I don't know too much about it except that he may have said "Okay, let's try it." But nobody can predict. The drawing was very poor… but he saw something about it he liked.

ROGER: So you wound up working for both the All-American group and National Comics.

SHELLY: That's right.

ROGER: And you did most of your work at home…

SHELLY: Always. I never worked in the office. I'd go in, pick up a script, and then go home.

ROGER: Did they provide the art paper to work on?

SHELLY: Not at the beginning, no. You had to provide your own supplies early on.

ROGER: What came next for you Shelly?

SHELLY: Then I got the opportunity to do the Hawkman. Someone else had created the character

and drew it for one issue and then Gaines had some disagreement with the artist. I'm not sure what happened but he called me in and said he wanted me to take over the strip. He said don't follow the way it was, you do it the way you want it. It wasn't Sheldon Mayer, it was M.C. Gaines that gave it to me.

ROGER: That's odd. Why would Gaines go around Mayer on something like that? Or was that standard procedure at the time?

SHELLY: Well, Mayer was a peculiar guy. He really didn't get along with most artists.

ROGER: So were you excited about taking over the Hawkman feature?

SHELLY: At the time, yes... you know, it was a big thing for me. And we started to alternate covers with the *Flash*. So every other month would be a Hawkman cover. Then M.C. Gaines said to me, "You've got to draw faster," because he wanted to put out a quarterly with Hawkman. Well, in the beginning, I couldn't draw it fast enough and sustain the quality I wanted. Now, I also did a lot of covers for the *Green Lantern* comic. I did all of the early covers for *Green Lantern*. I did a lot of *Flash* covers too, so I was kept pretty busy.

ROGER: How much time would they give you to do a cover assignment?

SHELLY: Well usually I think we'd have a couple of days to do it.

ROGER: You got along well with M.C. Gaines... how was the working relationship with Sheldon Mayer?

SHELLY: When I first met Sheldon Mayer we had a very good relationship. We went horseback riding together, etc., etc. But as I became more independent and more popular, that friendship kind of melted away, and we didn't get along too well. Then I went into the service... I was gone for two years. While I was in the service I kept sending those oddity

Cont. on facing page ▶▶

THE HAND OF THE WEREWOLF! I HAD TO CUT IT OFF, TO FREE MYSELF SO I COULD ESCAPE. IS IT... PROOF ENOUGH?
IT'S PROOF ENOUGH FOR US! PROOF OF A SPINE-TINGLING ADVENTURE IN HORROR THAT WILL LIVE FOREVER IN THE ANNALS OF THE SUPERNATURAL!

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The last panel of Larsen's "The Werewolf's Curse," (Crime Patrol #11, Apr/May 1949) was originally slated to go into TOTS #1. Note the text at the bottom references "...THE SUPERNATURAL!"

Tales of the **Supernatural!**

Let's not forget that Bill's mother was a senior financial partner in the company during EC's heyday.

After my first discussion with Shelly about *TOTS*, I began to wonder what had happened to the original art itself. Bill was known as a guy who never threw anything away unless absolutely necessary. Obviously, Gaines must have kept the book. But the originals have never turned up in the marketplace. Nothing like this had ever been sold in the Cochran auctions or the Sotheby's auctions. Where could the art be? A whole book of unpublished horror art, put together by EC artists. Wow! That would be something to locate, and perhaps eventually publish! In hindsight I should have just picked up the phone and called Bill Gaines about it. I had known Bill for well over 20 years and could have asked him all these questions. I'm sure he would have had all the answers. Unfortunately, I let too much time slip by... and in 1994 Bill Gaines died.

When I interviewed Moldoff over the phone in May of 1990, he read from his journal and told me more details about *TOTS*. As he began to read off the titles of the stories produced for *TOTS*, I couldn't help but immediately recognize the title of the story that Johnny Craig had done. "Zombie Terror!"

For those not familiar with the history of EC comics, "Zombie Terror" was published in *Moon Girl* #5 in the Fall of 1948, and has always been recognized as EC's very first horror story. Shelly also told me the names of the other stories during that first interview, then later he sent me a copy of his journal entry page on *TOTS*. It was soon easy to determine that indeed, Gaines had utilized almost all of the *TOTS* material between 1948 and 1950. Here's a listing of the stories from Shelly's journal, and where they were published in EC pre-Trend titles:

"Vampire of the Bayous" - Shelly Moldoff - *Moon Girl* #4 (Summer 1948)

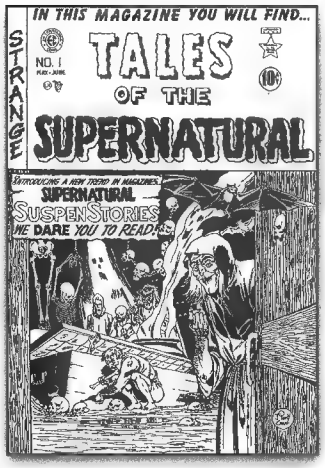
"Curse of the Werewolf!" (Title changed to "The Werewolf's Curse") - Howard Larsen - *Crime Patrol* #11 (April 1949)

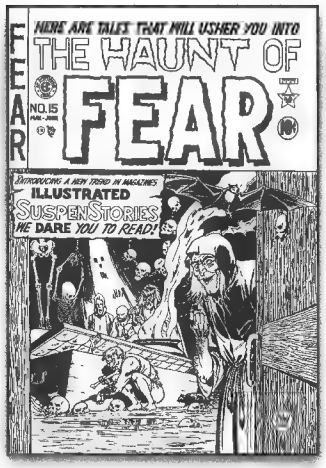
"Zombie Terror" - Johnny Craig - *Moon Girl* #5 (Fall 1948)

"The Hanged Man's Revenge" - Howard Larson (Replaced Craig) - *Crime Patrol* #12 (June 1949)

Shelly's journal notations on these stories had obviously two errors, or rather changes that he had not noted. The story by Howard Larsen originally titled "Curse of the Werewolf" was changed to "The Werewolf's Curse." Johnny Craig (originally scheduled to draw two stories for *TOTS*) wound up doing only "Zombie Terror." Craig was scheduled to draw "The Hanged Man's Revenge," but the job got turned over to Howard Larsen instead. This was probably because Craig was noted for being one of the slower artists in the EC stable of talents and, with also having to supply the cover for *TOTS*, it probably just became too much for him to handle. Craig probably had his regular EC workload to contend with as well.

Larsen, on the other hand, was a veteran talent of some speed who had banged out numerous jobs and features for Fiction House comics from 1943 to 1947. (Eventually Larsen went on to work for many other publishers in the industry). Since Shelly had not noted the title of the two-page text story written by Gardner Fox, I had to go looking for it in my pre-Trend ECs. After much searching and reading, I narrowed the choices down to two possibilities. And I'm still not absolutely positive of which text story it is. These choices are "The Ghost of Markham Manor" in *Crime Patrol* #8 (Fall 1948) and "Out of the Grave" in *Moon Girl Fights Crime* #7 (May/June 1949). Presently I'm leaning more toward "The Ghost of Markham Manor" simply because the word "Supernatural" is mentioned at the end of the story. When I think of the term "Supernatural," I think more of ghosts or ghost stories. The other text story entitled "Out of the Grave," sounds a bit too strong for *Tales of the Supernatural*. More on this later.





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Could this have been what Moldoff and Gaines had planned? Beside a mock-up of TOTS #1 using Craig's cover art from HOF #15 (#1, May/Jun 1950) is the actual cover... which does not feature "The Old Witch" as many believe (her first appearance came in the following issue). Hill has deduced that this art is the most likely candidate for the missing TOTS #1 cover

Looking at the costs to produce *TOTS* #1, the story is told by the figures in the left column on a page in Shelly's journal. It tells us that the writer of these stories, Dick Kraus, was paid $6 per page for scripting. Gardner Fox's pay on the other hand was a bit more. He received $25 for a two-page text story or about $12.50 per page. The listing for Stan (who is actually Shelly's brother... helping out) doesn't indicate any amount being paid to him for writing the "Introductory" page, or the "Superstitions" page. Craig received $25 for the cover art and Jim Wroten was paid $2 per page to letter a total of 28 pages for a total of $56.

Oddly enough, there aren't any apparent page rates listed for the artists, although we can probably assume that the rates were at least equal to what Bill Gaines was paying his artists during the period shortly after he took over the company. As Gaines stated in an interview published in *Spa-Fon* #5 (September 1969) "In comics, when I first started out, the going rate for script was about six bucks per page, and the going rate for art was about twenty bucks, twenty-three to be exact." At $23 per page for art we can probably conclude that a total of about $623 was paid just to the artists for the cover and four stories. At $6 per page, writing expenses totaled (up to) $181. The lettering was $56. So all in all about $860 was the expenditures paid out for the first issue of *Tales Of The Supernatural*.

In looking over the information provided by Shelly's journal entry on *TOTS*, one significant question continues to puzzle me. Why is there no listing for the artist's pay for producing these four stories? I guess one possible answer might be that Gaines may have paid them separately, out of his own pocket, as he usually did upon completion of any artwork. That was generally Bill's policy. My understanding from talking with Shelly is that the listed expenditures were amounts paid out of his pocket. If one adds up only the expenditures listed on Shelly's journal page, it totals $262. If that is a correct list of Shelly's out-of-pocket costs for *TOTS* #1, then why would he settle later on with Gaines for only $250; an amount shy of the total by $12?

We can probably assume that the "Introductory" page prepared by Shelly's brother Stan never got used. The other page called "Superstitions" may have been used later as a text story printed in *Vault of Horror* #23 (February/March 1952). There's no way to be sure.

Naturally, after having identified and located the stories that were originally slated to make up *TOTS* #1, I began re-reading these stories and also went looking for other early EC horror stories that might show a relation to the theme of *(Continued on page 58)*

pages to Vince Sullivan at National and he bought them. He kept me in the bucks while I was in the service. I would do pages on weekends. I was very grateful for that.

ROGER: Did Mayer give you any work during that time?

SHELLY: No. I didn't get any work from Mayer.

ROGER: Did he every explain why?

SHELLY: No... well, first of all I wasn't able to do a whole Hawkman story while in the service. The only thing I could do was the oddity pages or fill-in pages like that because I could only do one or two pages a month. I was in the service and my time wasn't my own, but I would do a couple of pages, then I'd send them in and I'd get a check for $24 or something like that. And I greatly appreciated it at that time.

ROGER: Where were you stationed at during the war?

SHELLY: I was in Missouri for a while... and then I wound up in Long Island City in the Signal Corps animation branch. It was called the Signal Corps Photographic Center, and part of it was animation. This is where they made movies for the Army and all the other branches as well. They made training films, propaganda films. There was quite a bit of animation being done on maps. You know, strategic type of things.

ROGER: And what years where you in the service?

SHELLY: I was in from 1944 until 1946.

ROGER: Was the Signal Corps animation branch where you met Graham Ingels?

SHELLY: No, I met Graham Ingels many years after that. I met Charlie Biro in the animation branch though. This was at a time when I think his crime comics were doing well for him.

ROGER: What kind of guy was Biro?

SHELLY: He was a nice guy. A loud guy... but very congenial. We really never worked together, I just met him there. We worked in different areas. They had what we called cells in the animation branch. There were three or four fellows to a cell. Every cell would be assigned something to do. Like a certain sequence or part of a project or film. So each cell had their work cut out for them. But they had a lot of talent there from Disney Studios, Fleischer Studios, etc. Matter of fact, that guy who did all the horror stuff for the *New Yorker* magazines was there. Charles Adams! And he was a great guy, not to mention a talented cartoonist. A real nice fellow. He'd talk to anybody, you know. *(Continued on page 58)*

Atlas-Seaboard

Martin Goodman had sold Marvel Comics years before. With the Atlas-Seaboard line, he tried the Marvel formula again.

MMM ZLLT! MMM SPUT-SPUT
NICE 'N' EASY, HOTSHOT. NO FALSE MOVES--LESS YOU WANT YOUR GIRL HERE TO GO OUT WITH A BANG!
ALL CHARACTERS & ART © SEABOARD PERIODICALS, INC.

It started, as these things do, with a lot of promise. It was 1974 and a brand new comic book publishing company offered creators high pay rates to write and illustrate an entire new universe full of characters. Atlas-Seaboard offered forms of creator ownership, a venue for trying new things, and a mix of established, seasoned professionals and hot newcomers.

The very existence of this firm challenged the big two in terms of retaining creators. If this new enterprise succeeded, Marvel and DC would have to either accept their losses or raise their own pay rates. Sure, going up against the big guys had been tried before, but this time it at least *seemed* different.

Marvel Comics founder Martin Goodman, who had sold Marvel a few years before, and his son Charles, started Seaboard Periodicals with the hope of rivaling Goodman's old company. To do this, they followed the Marvel formula of the day: superhero comics, barbarian comics, and black and white magazines. They even adopted the name Atlas, familiar to Silver Age fans as the name Marvel published under after Timely and before Marvel Comics.

As editor-in-chief, they signed up Jeff Rovin, known to many comic fans for his time editing at Warren (and who currently ghosts the *Tom Clancy's Op Center* series for a token thank-you on the acknowledgement page). His Warren background would show clearly in the layout and design of the black and white magazines.

As editor, the Goodmans hired Larry Lieber, a Marvel veteran dating back to when Marvel itself was called Atlas. Lieber, of course, is Stan Lee's brother.

The general look of the comic book covers, unlike the magazines, was also about as Marvel as one could get shy of using the Marvel logo.

Creators including Steve Ditko, Wally Wood, Archie Goodwin, Howard Chaykin, Jack Sparling, Rich Buckler and others [see checklists] made the move to Atlas.

Original characters like *Demon-Hunter* (created and illustrated by Buckler) and *The Scorpion* (created, written and illustrated by Chaykin) were intermingled with a Hulk knock-off (*The Brute*), a Spider-Man knock-off (*The Destructor*), and a couple of Marvel-esque barbarians (*Ironjaw* and *Wulf the Barbarian*).

Several of the titles, though trite in concept, had a smattering of freshness due to the talent involved. *The Destructor*, for instance, featured the team of Archie Goodwin (writer), Steve Ditko (pencils) and Wally Wood (inks). The concept: young man headed down the wrong path until death of a loved one forces him to confront responsibility. Throw in a graveside vow of righting wrongs, and you get the idea. Still, in his pre-hero days The Destructor is actually an anti-Peter Parker of sorts. Not the most original of ideas, but with a team like this it's hard to go that far wrong.

Unfortunately, though, many of the titles read as if the publisher (Charles Goodman, at least in title) said, "We need a Hulk book" or "We need a horror book."

The lack of originality didn't help sales that were already hampered by limited newsstand space. Marvel and DC had increased their output and pushed Atlas off the shelves. There was no direct market for comic books yet, so the newsstand was life or death. In this case, it wasn't life.

Atlas-Seaboard

In his recent *CBM* profile, Lieber recounted how he was on jury duty while awaiting the verdict on whether Atlas lived or died. The word came down, and that was that. The short-lived experiment was less than two years in duration with less than one full year of published product.

The promise of Atlas at the beginning was probably gone well before the end. Creators had, in fact, been bailing for several months [see sidebar]. Chaykin left over a dispute with Rovin which resulted in *The Scorpion* #3 having little, if anything, to do with *The Scorpion* #1-2. From one of their few sparkling gems of originality, the title became a bad Daredevil/Spider-Man sort of coagulation.

NOW THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO FIGHT FOR! NO MATTER HOW MANY OF THE ALIENS I KILL--
--THOUSANDS MORE APPEAR TO TAKE THEIR PLACE! NO POWER ON EARTH CAN STOP THEM!

Gary Friedrich wrote and Ric Estrada & Frank Giacoia drew "A Man for All Centuries!" in the last Phoenix

Larry Hama, writer-artist on *Wulf the Barbarian*, had also already quit. Pay rates were headed down and Rovin's editorial decision making, described at the time as seemingly arbitrary, was rubbing people the wrong way.

The legacy of the Atlas line is small, but in a way it is not insignificant. They were the first to challenge Marvel and DC in the '70s. The idea of offering a degree of creator ownership or control was still entirely foreign to the big two then, truly existing only in the undergrounds of the day.

Would Eclipse Comics or Pacific Comics have popped up when they did, or later First Comics if Atlas hadn't taken the plunge? The creator rights movement practically guaranteed *something* would have happened sooner or later, but without Atlas there's got be at least a small question of whether it would have happened the way it did.

LONG HOURS LATER...
AND THAT IS ALL I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO LEARN! AFTER THE GREAT WARS, OUR PEOPLE DROVE THE MUTANTS ONTO THIS MOUNTAIN--
--AND HERE THEY HAVE REMAINED THROUGH THE CENTURIES, ALWAYS HATING OUR PEOPLE, BUT NEVER STRONG ENOUGH TO ATTACK THEM!
BUT HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE? I CANNOT UNDERSTAND IT!
AND WHY SHOULD WE BE MADE TO PAY FOR THE SINS OF SUCH DISTANT ANCESTORS?!
HOW CAN SUCH HATRED CONTINUE TO FESTER--EVEN AFTER THOUSANDS OF YEARS?!

Talented Pablo Marcos drew "Mountain of Mutants" for Barbarians #1

Aftermath

Martin and Charles Goodman got out of comics. Jeff Rovin has worked in the comics field and other media. Larry Lieber has illustrated a very long run on *The Amazing Spider-Man* newspaper strip scripted by his brother, Stan Lee.

The various creators employed by Atlas went many different directions. Some were never heard from in comics again. Some went on to become comics superstars.

Two of the characters also found employment with other publishers. Sure, it's not the first time a character has been picked up. The modern era of DC, for example, encompasses characters created at Fawcett, Charlton, Quality and elsewhere. This, however, may have been the first time rights (or some of them) reverted to their creators.

The characters in question are *Demon Hunter* and *The Scorpion*, and both of them landed at Marvel.

Demon-Hunter to Devil-Slayer to Bloodwing

Actually, Demon-Hunter landed in two places. In his Atlas origin story (and only issue), Gideon Cross had renounced the demon cult which had granted him incredible powers and now stood opposed to them. Their goal was "Xenogenisis," the rebirth of a demon race on earth.

David Anthony Kraft (*Comics Interview*) wrote it and Rich Buckler plotted and illustrated it.

Meanwhile, over at Marvel, Buckler's "Deathlok The Demolisher" series in *Astonishing Tales* had been canceled mid-story. The story was to be more or less wrapped up in *Marvel Spotlight* #33 (1977), although it would also carry into *Marvel Two-in-One* #27 before fading into the great land of permanently dangling storylines.

Again with Kraft writing and Buckler illustrating, Deathlok returned ostensibly for the wrap-up story. Only it was easily as much the origin story for Devil-Slayer.

Devil-Slayer was Eric Simon Payne. He had renounced the demon cult which had granted him incredible powers and now stood opposed to them. Their goal, and stop me if you've heard this before, was "Xenogenisis," the rebirth of a demon race on earth. His costume was blue with an orange cape where Demon-Hunter's was red with a blue cape,

but otherwise it's the same guy. Devil-Slayer went on to pop up in Kraft's *The Defenders* #58-60 (1978) for a three-part story entitled, not surprisingly, "Xenogenisis." He wasn't done there.

Well, Devil-Slayer was, as was Eric Simon Payne, but Gideon Cross wasn't.

Gideon Cross came back as Bloodwing, in the Buckler-published *Galaxia Magazine* (1981). This one didn't get as far as mentioning Xenogenisis, but there was mention of a demonic "Crimson Brotherhood." The character looked the same as his Marvel incarnation on the color cover (interiors were black and white), but the feel was a little more rough and tumble.

Scorpion to Dominic Fortune

Since the early 1970s, Howard Chaykin seems to have been turning out intense characters with heavy doses of adventure, politics, sex and a generally cynical, rogue-ish behavior. Cody Starbuck, *The Scorpion*, Dominic Fortune, his version of *The Shadow*, *American Flagg*, *Power & Glory*.

At Atlas, a falling-out over control of *The Scorpion* lead to Chaykin's departure before the ship had sunk. He showed up at Marvel where he, with Len Wein providing a script, came up with Dominic Fortune. The color of the outfits may be slightly different, but the attitude and presence of the characters is unmistakably the same. The result was two stories, one written by Wein and one by Chaykin himself, that appeared in *Marvel Preview* #21 under the "Bizarre Adventures" banner.

The background stories were different enough. *The Scorpion* was set in New York and the character was somehow long-lived and of unspecified age. He was, though, a mercenary for hire with the same attitude and demeanor as Dominic Fortune, who instead lived just off the west coast, near Los Angeles, outside territorial waters, on a rather large gambling ship. Both were set in the late 1930s and had elements of the approaching World War II looming in the background.

Missing from Fortune was the undefined extended life scenario, but otherwise their similarities overwhelm the differences. Chaykin has explored the theme of extended life in other stories, too, most notably his four-issue DC *Shadow* mini-series (1980).

MEANWHILE, AS THE BRUTE'S LIFE HANGS IN THE BALANCE...
THE UNITED STATES DEFENSE DEPARTMENT! HAH! A MORE APT TITLE WOULD BE THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFEAT!
YEARS I SPENT ON THIS PROJECT FOR THEM--YEARS! AND WHAT IS MY FINAL REWARD!?
THE FOOLS! WHY WOULDN'T THEY LISTEN TO ME--OR AT LEAST GIVE ME A CHANCE TO CORRECT MY ERROR!
I, DOCTOR ROLF HENDRICK--HANDED THEM THE GREATEST WEAPON EVER CREATED BY MAN--
--AND, THE IDIOTS THAT THEY ARE, THEY REFUSED IT!
REJECTION! TOTAL--UNEQUIVOCAL REJECTION!
ONE TINY MALFUNCTION! THAT WAS ALL THEY NEEDED TO TURN US AWAY!
BUT WHEN THAT MALFUNCTION IS CORRECTED--AH, THEN THEY WILL SEE US AGAIN!
AND WHEN THEY DO, THEY WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO BOW TO OUR SUPREMACY--TO REALIZE THEIR DEPARTMENT--THEIR GOVERNMENT--INDEED THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES ARE AT OUR COMMAND!
BUT I SAY TO YOU--I WILL NOT ACCEPT THEIR VERDICT! YOUR POTENTIAL IS FAR TOO GREAT!
NO! FOR YOU, IT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING! YOU WILL NOT BE LOST TO OBSCURITY ON MY ACCOUNT!
YOU REPRESENT MY LIFE'S WORK--MY LEGACY! AND I SWEAR BY ALL THAT I HOLD HOLY--THAT THE RECOGNITION WE BOTH DESERVE WILL BE OURS!
BLUE EYE

Artist Pablo Marcos transforms a witch into a young girl in Ironjaw #4

Page 10 from "...Live or let die" (Brute #3) is an example of artist Alan Lee Weiss' excellent page composition

J.C. Vaughn is the Timonium, Maryland-based Executive Editor of Gemstone Publishing. In addition to contributing regularly to CBM, *he recently interviewed Al Feldstein and Al Williamson for* The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide *#30.*

WHAT'S IN ATLAS?

by The Terrible Trio
(Mike Wilbur, Michael Naiman, and J.C. Vaughn)

The Comics (23 titles):

THE BARBARIANS - This first (and only) issue of Atlas' third Sword & Sorcery title was to begin an ongoing anthology series featuring "...not only established brawlers like Ironjaw and Wulf, but also new concepts in swashbuckling heroics..."

Published between *Ironjaw* #3 and #4, the lead feature united Ironjaw with his new biographer Gary Friedrich (who assumed scripting duties with *Ironjaw* #4) and set a new direction for the character's own series. The backup in this issue was the story of Andrax, an Olympic athlete from 1976 kidnapped by a mad scientist and put in suspended animation to awaken 2000 years later in a desolate future.

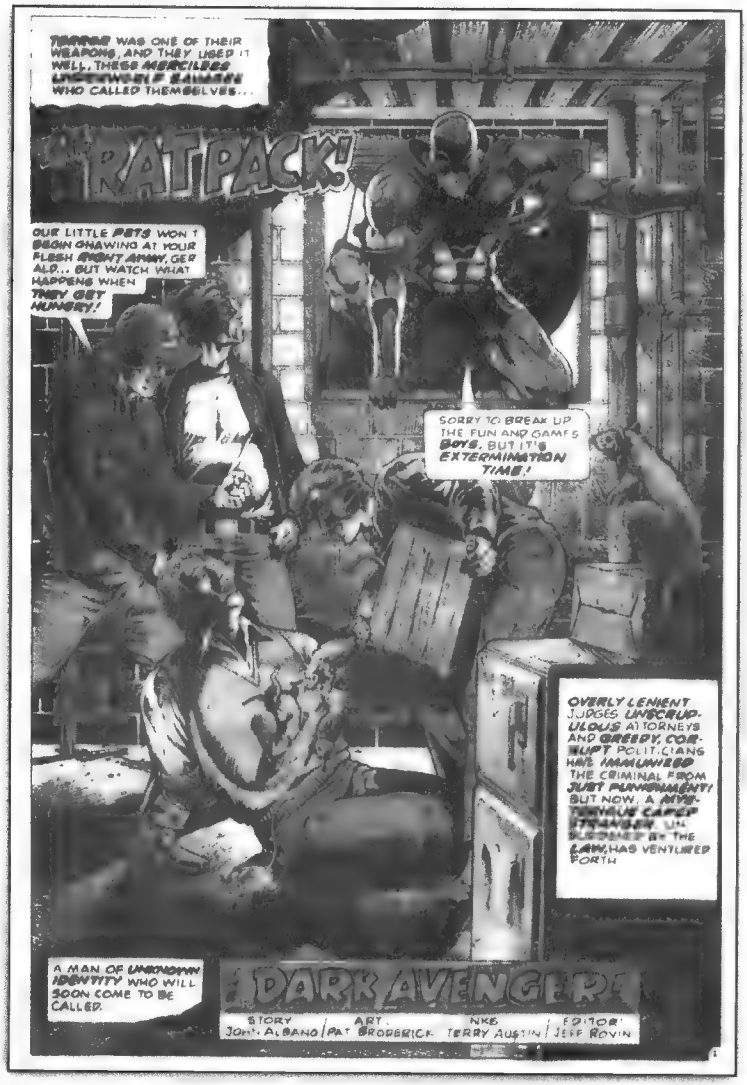
BLAZING BATTLE TALES - A one shot war comic featuring Sgt. Hawk (sounds a lot like Rock...) and his Killer Platoon. Set in WWII, we have potato mashers, damsels in distress, carnage, and explosions... all typical of the genre. There's also a couple of bondage panels and the omnipresent Nazi devils!

The one redeeming feature is a John Severin two-page salute to American hero Private William Swanson closing out this less than memorable book.

THE BRUTE - The Brute was a sub-human cave dweller frozen during the last Ice Age and thawed "in the Spring of 1975" from the heat produced by a nuclear power plant built near his subterranean tomb. Hungry and confused, the Brute kills two young boys exploring his cave. A female scientist is awarded custody by the court, but her plans of study are ruined when the father of the murdered boys is killed trying to exact vengeance.

From there, the series becomes a sub-human version of The Fugitive, with the woman scientist trying to save the Brute, even as police hunt him with orders to kill.

The third and final issue foreshadowed a change in direction, with the


RATPACK!
SORRY TO BREAK UP THE FUN AND GAMES BOYS, BUT IT'S EXTERMINATION TIME!
DARK AVENGER
STORY John Albano / ART Pat Broderick / INKS Terry Austin / EDITOR Jeff Rovin

ABOVE: **Destructor #1** (cover by Larry Lieber and Wally Wood) was written by Archie Goodwin, penciled by Steve Ditko, and inked by Wally Wood
LEFT: **Enter the Dark Avenger (Phoenix #3) by Pat Broderick and Terry Austin**

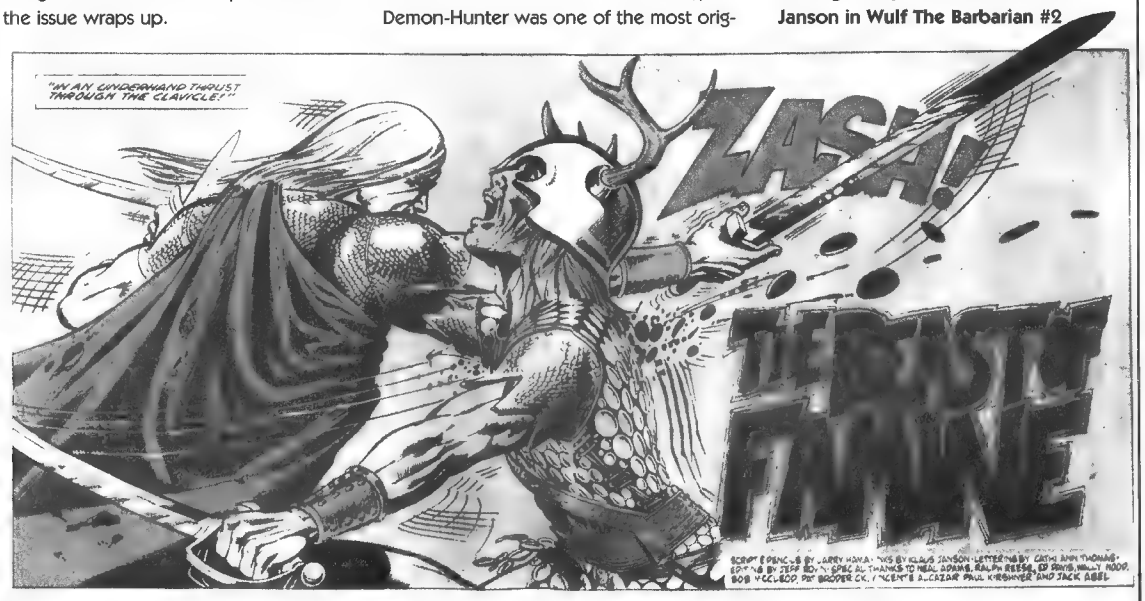
Badia Romero perfectly illustrates a female werewolf's transformation in "The Bog Beast" (Tales of Evil #3)

Brute speaking his first words, and the introduction of a costumed nemesis, Doomstalker.

THE COUGAR - Stuntman Jeff Rand thrives on the danger of his chosen profession, he is known to his fellow stuntmen as The Cougar, due to his cat-like speed and agility. Issue #1 has him battling a vampire & pretty standard supernatural fare all around. Issue #2 shows us his origin and continues the tale with the obligatory werewolf saga. Battling throughout the issue his heretofore unknown werewolf brother, we never discover what happens to the crippled Coogie and his shattered spinal cord as the issue wraps up.

DEMON-HUNTER - Created and plotted by Marvel veteran Rich Buckler, written by David Anthony Kraft (best known for his run on The Defenders), Demon-Hunter was one of the most orig-

ABOVE: Sekowsky and Marcos make the Brute come to life in the debut issue. BELOW: Post-Code gore by artists Hama and Janson in Wulf The Barbarian #2



inal titles published by Atlas-Seaboard (the character would later resurface as in two different incarnations.)

"What does a Demon-Hunter do?" read the opening page, "Everything he can – to prevent Xenogenesis... the rebirth of a demon race here on Earth! His name? Gideon Cross. He is a telepath."

Empowered by a cult seeking to bring about Xenogenesis, Gideon Cross was empowered with a shadow cloak and new abilities to serve their bidding. He turned against them, however, and became a one-man force fighting against their evil.

Unlike Dr. Strange or Dr. Fate, Demon-Hunter was fighting a specific war against a specific evil.

ABOVE: **Grim Ghost vs. the demon who conquered Satan himself (issue #3)** BELOW: **Pseudo-Shakespeare from Wulf The Barb. #3**

THE DESTRUCTOR - One of the longest-lived Atlas-Seaboard characters started with the amazing team of Archie Goodwin (writer), Steve Ditko (pencils), Wally Wood (inks) and Larry Lieber (editing).

Jay Hunter was a low-life, young thug-in-training. His father was a noble scientist trying to come up with formula to expand man's senses, to create a super-hero. When Jay's crime lord boss marked him for death, both he and his father were mortally wounded. There was enough serum for one. His father gave it to him. He became The Destructor.

AN INTRIGUING TALE-- YET, IT WOULD SEEM UNLIKE MORDEK TO ALLOW ANYONE SO MUCH FREEDOM AS YOU POSSESS!
YOU UNDERSTAND MY STEP-FATHER WELL, BARBARIAN! WERE HE TO KNOW THE TRUE EXTENT OF MY POWER, SURELY HE WOULD TRY TO SUBJUGATE ME TO HIS AWESOME POWER!
BUT SO PERFECTLY HAVE I PLANNED EVERY MOVE, HE HAS YET TO--
FOOLS!
PLINK!
MORDEK!

Almost an anti-Spider-Man, he was shunned by his high school crowd because he used to shake them down for money. Otherwise, this one stuck pretty close to the Spidey formula, down to the oath at the end of #1.

Goodwin stayed for three issues... with Gerry Conway writing the fourth. Ditko handled the art on all four with Wood inking the first two and Al Milgrom inking the fourth.

FRIGHT- Featuring the Son of Dracula, this lone issue tells of the original Dracula's union with a female blood-relative. Betrayed by Dracula following the birth of their son, the unnamed woman sends the baby away to America with a foster mother, with instructions for his "protection". Furious, Dracula vows to one day reclaim his son.

Years later, in 1975, Columbia University professor Adam Lucard is horrified when his true nature reveals itself for the first time. Aware of his heritage, Lucard always takes nocturnal precautions passed down from his natural mother... but an intruder disturbs his rest and becomes his first victim.

GRIM GHOST- Recently hung Revolutionary War highwayman Matthew Dunsinane is going to suffer the tortures of perdition, thanks to his new found buddy Satan... unless, of course, they can make a "deal." Lucifer wants Matthew to keep him supplied with souls for his domain since evil people deserve to die! Armed with a few parlor tricks supplied Satan, the Grim Ghost is sent into the 20th Century to harvest his crop of evil-doers. He rides mounted atop a jet black steed laughing like a demon from the darkest pits of hell only to battle evil in our time. Sheeesh!

HANDS OF THE DRAGON - Wu Teh was a twin raised by their grandfather in a mysterious Chinese monastery. Trained in the martial arts, the other twin, Ling, turned to evil. Wu Teh, also known as The Dragon, became a journalist and moved to America to seek out his evil brother, who worked for the Evil Dr.

Nhu. Not just Dr. Nhu, Evil Dr. Nhu. The story was convoluted, but probably could have been straightened out if it had taken place over two issues. A second issue, though, this book would never have.

IRONJAW - The first of the Atlas sword-slinging characters, Ironjaw roams the world in Earth's distant, post-apocalyptic future. He's a violent, amoral wanderer who lives for battle. Hired by rebels to help overthrow a tyrannical king, Ironjaw discovers his true heritage.

When he was an infant, his mother's lover killed Ironjaw's father, the true king, and ascended to the throne himself. With the complicity of the queen, the new king ordered the infant killed, since he would inherit the throne and depose the usurper upon reaching adulthood. A soft-hearted stablehand abandoned the infant on a snowy mountainside, rather than kill him.

After killing the tyrant-king, Ironjaw, identified by a distinctive birthmark as the true heir to the throne, is crowned king. Upon discovering to his dismay that "...a king cannot fight, or hunt, or steal or chase wenches...", Ironjaw chooses to slip away in the middle of the night, abandoning his new kingdom to resume his wanderer's ways.

After a personality-altering interlude in *The Barbarians* #1, Ironjaw returns in his 4th and final issue with the first part of his long-awaited origin story; the tale

WHO KILLED ATLAS-SEABOARD COMICS?

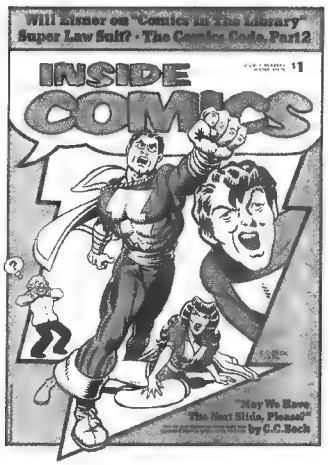
By Mike Wilbur

It's common belief, in retrospect, that the collapse of Atlas-Seaboard Publishing was merely a case of "too much too soon;" of trying to accomplish in mere months what had taken Marvel over a decade to do.

Or that they simply fell victim to the same cyclical market forces that led to the infamous "DC Implosion" of the mid-'70s.

However, a recently rediscovered copy of a fanzine titled *Inside Comics*, cover-dated Winter 1974-75, reveals a different story; a sordid tale of violated deals with creators, ownership disputes and other incidents of office politics so commonplace in the Perlman Age of Comics.

What follows is the complete text of a news item originally published in *Inside Comics* V1#4.

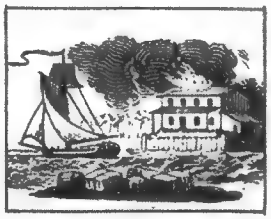

Will Eisner on "Comics in the Library"
Super Law Suit? · The Comics Code, Part 2
INSIDE COMICS
#1
"May We Have The Next Slide, Please!"
by C.C.Beck

THE COMIC REPORT

SEABOARD FLOUNDERS

In the last **INSIDE COMICS**, it was reported that **Seaboard Comics**, a new alternative to the Marvel/DC lines had been launched; now, some six months later, it appears the new line is in serious trouble. After a promising start, in which large numbers of top artists and writers left the established companies to work for Seaboard (in exchange for better pay and benefits), the process has started to reverse, Seaboard's top men are leaving in droves. Why?—

Item—Howard Chaykin, writer/artist on "the Scorpion quit" after extended arguments with Seaboard editor-in-chief Jeff Rovin—seems that although Howie's contract indicates that he has ownership of the Scorpion character and that he should have some say in writing Scorpion stories, Rovin commissioned an inventory piece to cover a missed deadline, a deadline missed because Rovin himself miscalculated his printing time.



Item—Mike Fleisher not only quit Seaboard, but instituted a suit concerning their alleged misuse and misappropriation of characters he created.

Howard Chaykin

Item—Sal Amendola (Phoenix) quit after the primary conception of the character as other than a superhero went down the drain with the creation of super-powers, a costume, and superhero-type scripts.

Item—Larry Hama (Wulf) quit after the cover for the third issue was rejected, said rejection coming after the rough was okayed by Seaboard's top three executives and after Hama was told to get it done over a weekend.

Item—Mike Ploog quit after his promised freedom in designing and executing new characters did not turn out to be quite as free as expected.

Item—Despite advertisements to the contrary, and reluctant permission by Jim Warren, it appears that Bill Dubay will not be doing a book for Seaboard; seems Dube expects the worse and is keeping himself out of a worsening situation.

All in all, it seems that the golden promise of Seaboard is rapidly becoming nothing more than a gilded dream, and the hope of the professionals for a third major market is rapidly becoming just another faded dream. With no sales figures in as yet, it is difficult to say if Seaboard will go under. It is possible to say, however, that unless changes in managerial and editorial attitude do not take place, the future of the Seaboard line is very shaky. □

of how the abandoned infant became the warrior.

MOORLOCK 2001 - The year is 2001 AD. A time when life as we know it has become hideously transformed. A rigid totalitarian regime holds the people in an iron grip, and mankind's greatest truths have been declared "inoperative." Professor Kroschell, the "mad botanical professor" had been conducting illegal botanical experimentations when he is gunned down by the jack-booted police. They confiscate a gigantic pod that holds a male human within its leaves. Outwardly appearing human yet structurally a plant, we are introduced to Moorlock! When transformed into his plant-like form his mind is clouded with the bestial preoccupation for finding food.

Only to later find out that the mad professor was planning to develop an army of Plant Men to overthrow the dictatorship, Moorlock continues his fight against oppression in 2001. Beware the touch of Moorlock! He'll turn everyone into fungus creatures!!

The saving grace is issue #3 which is drawn by Steve Ditko and inked by Berni Wrightson. Clearly one of the best issues in the entire Atlas comic book run.

PHOENIX - Near death, the sole survivor of the destruction of an orbiting space station is rescued by a group of aliens who observe the Earth from a secret sub-Arctic base. The aliens have been monitoring human evolution, which they claim to have initiated millions of years ago through the deliberate mutation of prehistoric apes.

Incorporating some of the aliens' technology into his flight suit, the astronaut escapes from his captors. On the run, he stops to use his stolen powers to aid a disaster-stricken Reykjavik, Iceland... thus alerting the aliens to his location. A battle ensues, and the aliens' installation is destroyed in an atomic explosion. Reykjavik is levelled by the shockwave.

On a rampage of revenge, the alien survivors set about the task of destroying all human life on earth, which they have now deemed a failed experiment. Beginning (of course) with New York City.

In issue #4 (with new writer Gary Friedrich at the helm) the title changes to Phoenix...The Protector. Blaming himself for the alien attacks on Reykjavik and New York, and despairing of any hope for the future of mankind now that the aliens are on the warpath, Phoenix carves a tombstone for planet Earth and launches himself into space at full power, planning to burn himself up in the atmosphere.

Rescued by yet another group of aliens (the Protectors) Phoenix is given a choice. Revealing themselves to be the masters of the previous group of aliens, the Protectors offer Phoenix the opportunity to prevent the termination of all human life on Earth by proving they are "worthy" of life. Given a new costume, new identity and new powers, Phoenix has become The Protector.

PLANET OF VAMPIRES - Playing on that era's popular post-apocalyptic subgenre of science fiction, Planet of Vampires manages to incorporate elements of Planet of the Apes, Omega Man, and Buck Rogers into a very interesting concept.

Launched in 2010, a manned Mars mission returns to Earth after a five-year journey. The six astronauts aboard are tense, arguing with each other, and they can't raise mission control. They're forced to make a water landing just outside New York, a city they find in ruins.

Following a nuclear war, society has split in two. Those who live in a protective dome, and the savages outside it. The folks from the dome rescue the astronauts (well, five of them anyway) and present themselves as the saviors of mankind. Only the savages are actually the good guys, the "domies" have been mutated into vampires who prey on humans.

Two great Pat Broderick-Neal Adams covers were followed by a Russ Heath cover.

POLICE ACTION - Big City cops are used to violence from petty heists to wholesale slaughter. But when one of their own ends up in pieces over a hundred foot area that's when NYPD's Sam Lomax gets called! Plenty of 38 Special gun play in these Mike Sekowsky drawn pages. Mike Ploog adds his Sam Spade-esque San Francisco based gum-shoe, Luke Malone as a backup feature. The artistic contrasts are striking. What we end up with is a bi-coastal police drama that had seen its day before it was published!

SAVAGE COMBAT TALES - This features Sgt. Ben Stryker and his Death Squad. Rescuing his band of war-hardened combat-happy commandos from certain death, Stryker assembles his group made up of unhappy US Army prisoners Lee Shigeta, judo expert (and of Asian origin); Duke Ripley, circus acrobat; Turk Ankrum, behemoth pro wrestler, and Ice Marko, gangster (and of course, his name ends in vowel). They start out as jailbirds and end up as heroes. By issue #3, the convicts get pardoned for their heroic exploits and wonder how they'll spend the rest of the war in retirement. Unfortunately, these Archie Goodwin written tales end with issue #3.

THE SCORPION - Probably the Atlas title with the most breakout potential was The Scorpion, written and illustrated by Howard Chaykin. At least the first two issues.

The Scorpion was a man presently called "Morro Frost," but who had many different identities over many different generations. Using themes he would continue to explore with many different characters over the next 15 years, Chaykin created a pulp-type adventure hero set in the days just before World War II.

The only problem is, it seems, that Chaykin wasn't fast enough for the schedule assigned to him by editor-in-chief Jeff Rovin (see sidebar). One has only to compare the covers of the first two issues to see the results (see *CBM* color gallery in this issue).

The schedule problems are further evidenced by the veritable Who's Who of artists who helped Chaykin finish the second issue: Berni Wrightson, Michael Kaluta, and Walter Simonson among them.

The third issue had just about noth-

ing to do with the first two. Chaykin quit over issues of control regarding his character when a Gabe Levy/Jim Craig story set 30 years later with the main character now a Daredevil-like costumed crime fighter. Only the logo remained.

Chaykin wasn't done with the character. He became Dominic Fortune at Marvel, where he pretty much promptly got lost in the shuffle. Chaykin himself, though went on to play a pivotal role in the independent comics boom of the early '80s with American Flagg and now works in Hollywood.

TALES OF EVIL - A horror anthology series with no regularly featured characters, *Tales of Evil* included stories of a demon conjuror, a werewolf, and a vampire in its inaugural issue. The second issue starred The Bog Beast, backed up with a ghost story and another werewolf story.

The final issue stars The Man-Monster, a conceited playboy mutated into an amphibious form by an unknown substance unearthed by an offshore oil rig. The Man-Monster, incidentally, battles a costumed villain named Hell-Blazer. The story concludes with the note "to be continued in the first exciting issue of Man-Monster."Also appearing in this issue is a second tale of The Bog Beast.

TARGITT - A candidate for the most neurotic title of the line. It starts like a typical guy-with-gun-gets-revenge-for-slain-family story.complete with thugs, drugs, teenage killers, and the mob. Then the action gets... well, cartoony. Slapstick. He blows a guy's head off and the panel looks more like an Archie comic. A few pages later, Modesty Blaise would fit right in. And that's just the first issue. In the second issue, he gets a costume just like Daredevil's foe, Bullseye, and it's a rocket sled downhill from there.

TIGERMAN - After injecting himself with an experimental serum derived from tiger chromosomes, a young doctor working at a clinic in Zambia acquires the strength, speed, and keen senses of a tiger. After his sister is murdered, Tiger-Man uses his enhanced abilities to track down and exact vengeance on her

Atlas Comparative Chronology	1974	1975										TITLE
TITLE	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	TOTAL
Gothic Romances (Mag)	1											1
Movie Monsters (Mag)	1		2		3		4					4
Devilina (Mag)		1				2						2
Weird Tales of the Macabre (Mag)		1		2								2
Grim Ghost		1		2				3				3
Ironjaw		1		2		3		4				4
Phoenix		1		2			3				4	4
Brute			1		2			3				3
Thrilling Adventure Stories (Mag)			1						2			2
Destructor			1		2		3		4			4
Moorlock 2001			1		2			3				3
Planet Of Vampires			1		2			3				3
Police Action			1		2		3					3
Savage Combat Tales			1		2			3				3
Scorpion			1			2		3				3
Tales of Evil			1		2			3				3
Vicki			1		2		3		4			4
Weird Suspense			1		2		3	3*				3
Western Action			1									1
Wulf the Barbarian			1		2			3		4		4
Targitt				1	2			3				3
Cougar					1			2				2
Tigerman					1		2			3		3
Barbarians							1					1
Hands of the Dragon							1					1
Blazing Battle Tales								1				1
Fright									1			1
Demon-Hunter										1		1
ISSUES PER MONTH	2	5	14	5	14	3	9	12	4	3	1	72

* *Weird Suspense* #3 shows June in the indicia and July on the cover

** Several issues have only a cover month with no month listed in the indicia. In those cases, the cover month was used for the comparative chronology.

Atlas-Seaboard

killers. Feeling unfulfilled after dispatching the murderers, Tigerman resolves to hunt down all criminals who prey on others.

VICKI - We have a teen blonde bombshell and her dark-haired female friend, Tommy the red-haired boyfriend and his dark-haired rival, and a large slow moving character named Tiny. Add them all up, drop them in Centerville, USA and you have Archie... er, Vicki..., Atlas' contribution to the teen scene.

Issue #1 is a 68-pager, but the oddball of the entire Atlas line is probably Vicki #2, the only Atlas square-bound comic of all the line's issues! On top of it all, there's nothing even printed on the spine of this, likely the rarest comic Atlas ever produced.

Once again we have cartoon teen hi jinx set in the high school background of Anywhere, USA. Enjoyable for just about any ponytailed youngster between the ages of 10 and 15.

WEIRD SUSPENSE - The Dark Ages in Europe finds the soon-to-be-burned-at-the-stake Spider Princess of the Tarantula cult placing a curse on the male descendants of her captor, Count Lycosa. They will be doomed to wander the countryside in quest of victims to appease their spider's lust! (whew)

Count Eugene Lycosa, the 11th in line to bear the heinous curse, has vowed to use his tarantula powers for some practical purpose. It is the the duty of the Avenging Arachnid to protect the helpless and to prey on evil wherever it may flourish. Issue #2 finds the High Priestess back from the grave seeking vengeance against the Count Eugene Lycosa, only to again end up on the short end of the battle.

The last issue finds our spider-buddy fighting a turban-topped swami who has the power to control inanimate matter. Peter Parker has nothing to fear from this fly-headed webman.

WESTERN ACTION - A "must have" for any serious western fan! Larry Lieber writes the "Kid Cody" story that is illustrated by Jonny Quest creator Doug Wildey! Better than average story and great art. The backup feature (by Steve Skeates and, incredibly, Jack Abel) features "The Comanche Kid."

WULF THE BARBARIAN - "...On a nameless world in a forgotten time..." there lived the man called Wulf. Orphaned 10 years ago when his parents, the king and queen, were slain in an ambush staged by trolls in the service of an evil sorcerer, Wulf has spent the last decade training for the day he would return to claim his birthright.

After his trainer/mentor is killed by the same troll who killed his mother 10 years earlier, Wulf avenges his mother's death, reclaims his father's sword from the slain troll, and begins his long-awaited trip home. As Wulf rides homeward with the intent to raise an army to raid the evil sorcerer's lair and free his hereditary kingdom, he encounters many magic-induced obstacles conjured by his foe.

The Magazines (5 titles):

DEVILINA - The only Atlas-Seaboard B&W magazine with a regularly featured character, Devilina is sort of a cross between Vampirella and Marvel's Satana.

The sister of Satan, Devilina is transported through time, along with her mother, from the Biblical "time of the casting-out" to modern day New England. There, under the watchful eye of her mother, the infant Devilina grows to womanhood in a mansion guarding "the secret entrance" to Hell.

Shortly after arriving at college, Devilina is contacted by Satan, who invites her to join him in ruling Hell. She refuses and is allowed to return home.

Years pass and Devilina pushes family concerns out of her mind as she pursues her studies. After her date to the graduation ball is killed in a fire triggered by Satan, she vows a war of vengeance on her brother.

The rest of the book is an anthology of horror stories featuring women in the lead roles, including a tale of the reanimated mummy of Queen Nefertiri.

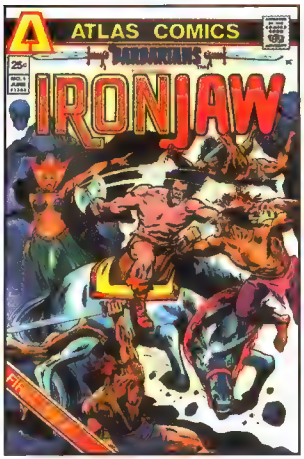
GOTHIC ROMANCES - The real oddball of the Atlas-Seaboard line and probably the rarest they ever published. What red-blooded male teen would possibly buy this magazine in 1974? Check out the ads for teeth whitening, convertible nude bras, weight loss miracles, and wig sales! While certainly reminiscent of covers from DC's romance comics (and maybe even *House of Mystery*), the only redeeming virtue once you get by the overbearing text content is the spot artwork by the likes of Howard Chaykin, Ernie Colon... and even Neal Adams!

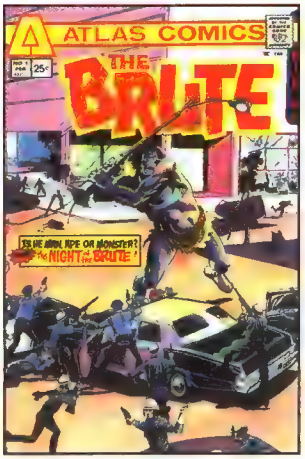
MOVIE MONSTERS - A large magazine format 8 X 10 3/4" devoted to television and movie sci-fi and monsters. This black and white mag utilizes movie stills and studio photos to illustrate this look at horror and space operas similar to the style of Famous Monsters of Filmland.

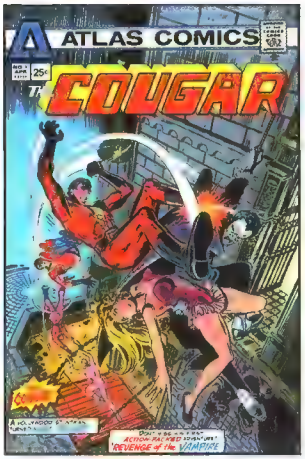
THRILLING ADVENTURE STORIES - These two issues (in particular the second), are worth the hunt it will take to find them. The first features a Tigerman story (a prequel to the series) and several other stories which would have been at home in any Warren title of the time. The first issue includes a beautiful Frank Thorne-illustrated version of "Lawrence of Arabia" and a really tacky, Warren-looking article on the films of Alistair Maclean.

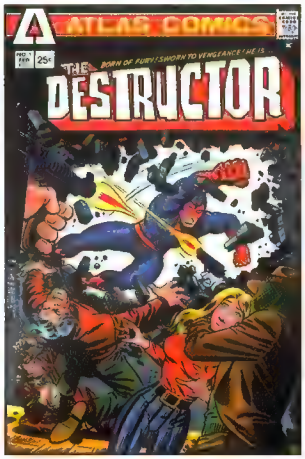
The second issue is probably one of the all-time gems of black and white magazines. Starting with the Neal Adams cover (obscured Warren-style with vapid copy), the issue contains an Archie Goodwin-Walter Simonson samuari story (circa their Manhunter work), and additional pieces by Jack Sparling, Russ Heath, John Severin... and Alex Toth! It also includes a Warren-like article on The Towering Inferno.

WEIRD TALES OF THE MACABRE - With covers by Jeff Jones and Boris Vallejo, respectively, the two issues of this series would have fit right in with the horror material being produced by Warren or Marvel at the time. Some beautiful work from artists including Pat Boyette, Ernie Colon, Leo Duranona, and John Severin. Bog Beast, seen in *Tales of Evil*, also appears in #2.









Barbarians
V1#1 (Jun 1975)

Blazing Battle Tales
V1#1 (Jul 1975)

Brute
V1#1 (Feb 1975)
V1#2 (Apr 1975)
V1#3 (Jul 1975);

Cougar
V1#1 (Apr 1975)
V1#2 (Jul 1975)

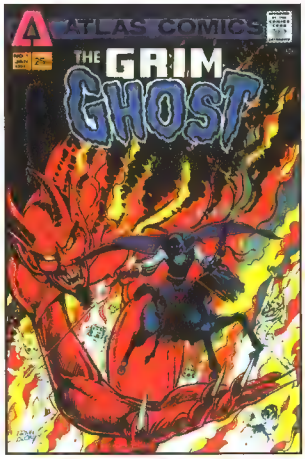
Demon-Hunter
V1#1 (Sep 1975)

Destructor
V1#1 (Feb 1975)

ALL COVERS © SEABOARD PERIOD CALS INC

Destructor
V1#2 (Apr 1975)
V1#3 (Jun 1975)
V1#4 (Aug 1975)

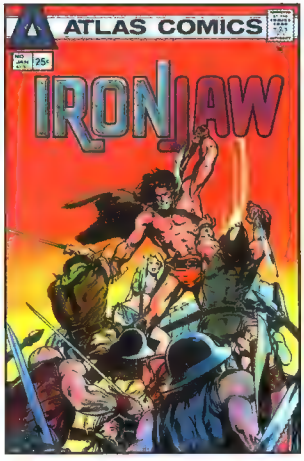
Fright
V1#1 (Aug 1975)

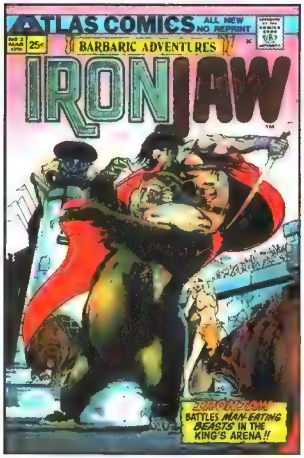


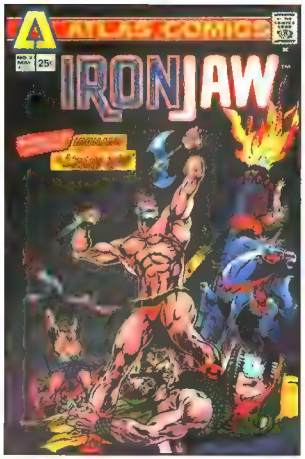
Grim Ghost
V1#1 (Jan 1975)
V1#2 (Mar 1975)
V1#3 (Jul 1975)

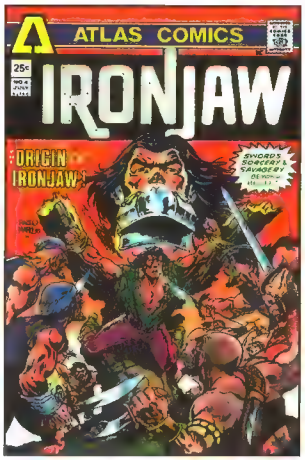
Hands of
the Dragon
V1#1 (Jun 1975)

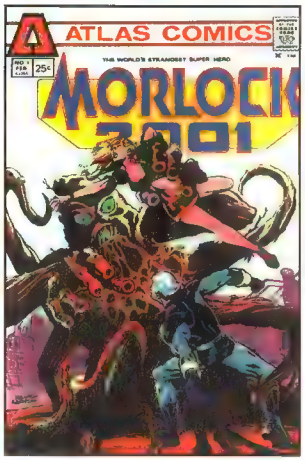
Ironjaw
V1#1 (Jan 1975)

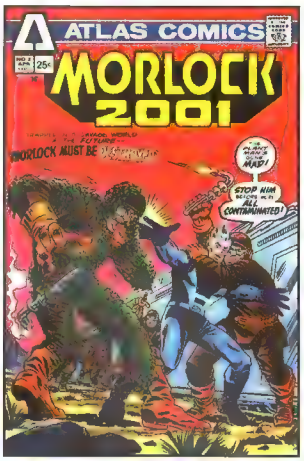








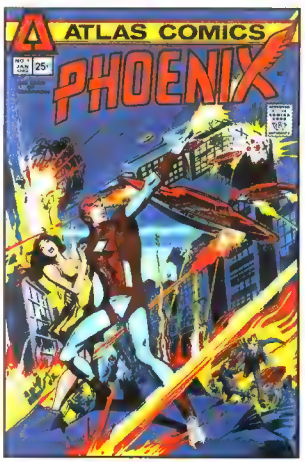


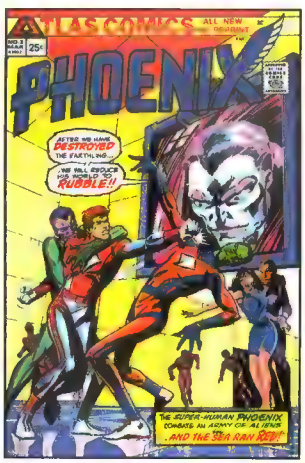


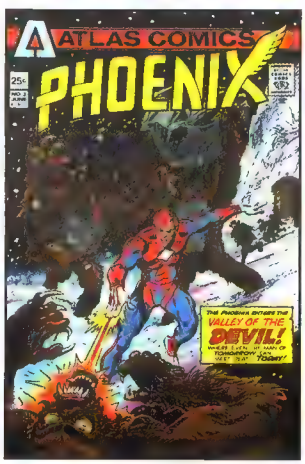
Ironjaw
V1#2 (Mar 1975)
V1#3 (May 1975)
V1#4 (Jul 1975)

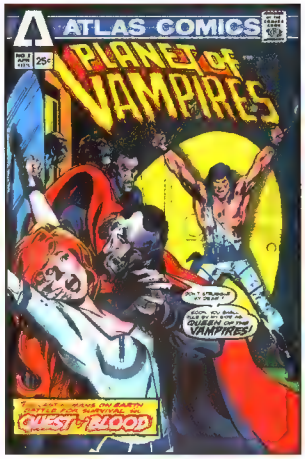
Morlock 2001
V1#1 (Feb 1975)
V1#2 (Apr 1975)
V1#3 (Jul 1975)

Phoenix
V1#1 (Jan 1975)
V1#2 (Mar 1975)
V1#3 (Jun 1975)



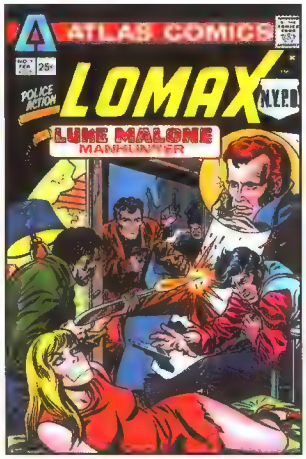

ATLAS COMICS
ALL NEW
PHOENIX
AZTEC WE HAVE DESTROYED THE EARTH, NO...
WE WILL REDUCE YOUR WORLD TO RUBBLE!!
THE SUPER-HUMAN PHOENIX COMBATS AN ARMY OF ALIENS
...AND THE SEA RAN RED!

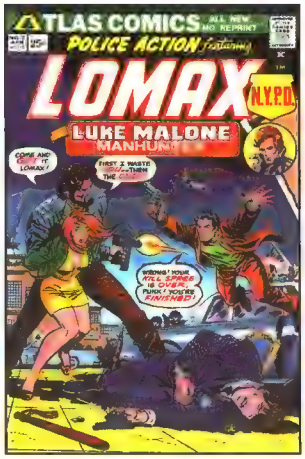




Phoenix
V1#4 (Oct 1975)

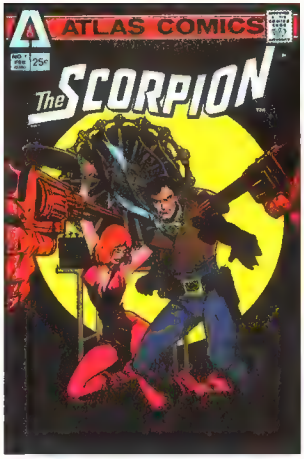
Planet of Vampires
V1#1 (Feb 1975)
V1#2 (Apr 1975)
V1#3 (Jul 1975)

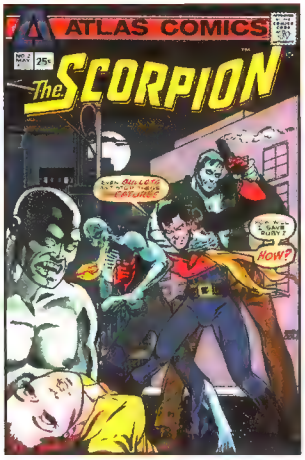


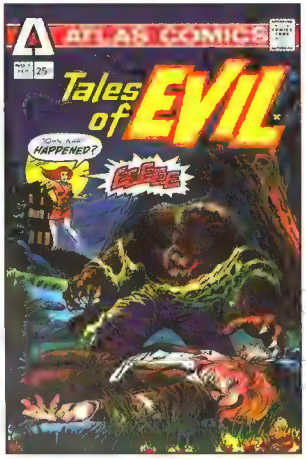


Police Action
V1#1 (Feb 1975)
V1#2 (Apr 1975)
V1#3 (Jun 1975)

Savage
Combat Tales
V1#1 (Feb 1975)
V1#2 (Apr 1975)





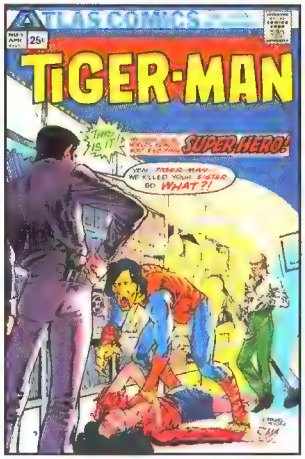


Savage Combat Tales V1#3 (Jul 1975, scarce)

Scorpion
V1#1 (Feb 1975)
V1#2 (May 1975)
V1#3 (Jul 1975)

Tales of Evil
V1#1 (Feb 1975)
V1#2 (Apr 1975)
V1#3 (Jul 1975)

Targitt
V1#1 (Mar 1975)
V1#2 (Jun 1975)



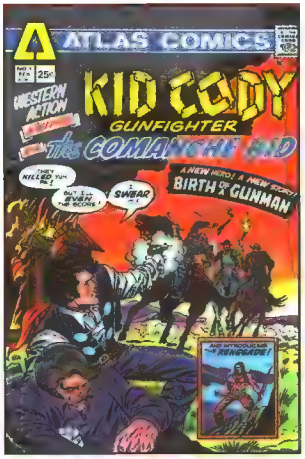
ATLAS COMICS
Vicki
LET'S GO, FOLKS. WE'VE BEEN WATCHING THESE LOVEBIRDS LONG ENOUGH!
I TOOK WELL SHOW THEM AT OUR NATIONAL CONVENTION!

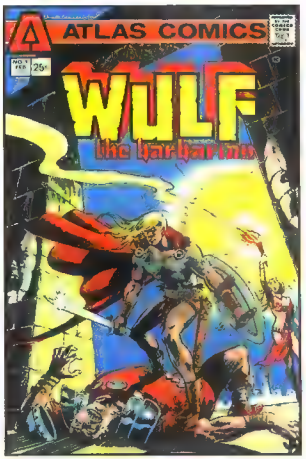
Targitt
V1#3 (Jul 1975)

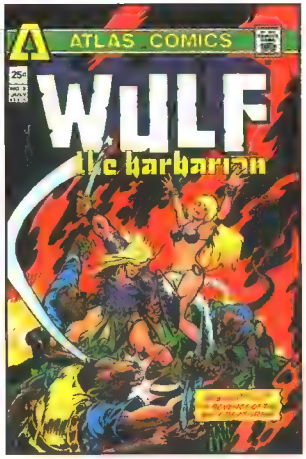
Tigerman
V1#1 (Apr 1975)
V1#2 (Jun 1975)
V1#3 (Sep 1975)

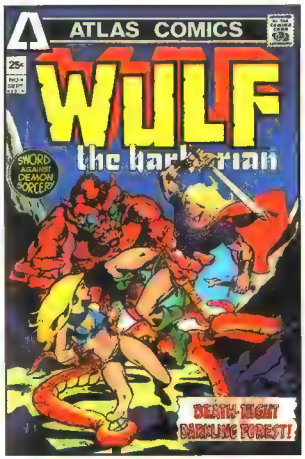
Vicki
V1#1 (Feb 1975)
V1#2 (Apr 1975)
V1#3 (Jun 1975)
V1#4 (Aug 1975)

Weird Suspense
V1#1 (Feb 1975)









Devilina
A sister of Satan meets a gruesome fate in "THE DEVIL'S DOMAIN!" page 5
PLUS: Exotic Tales of mermaids, mummies and mystery!

Weird Suspense
V1#2 (Apr 1975)
V1#3 (Jun 1975)

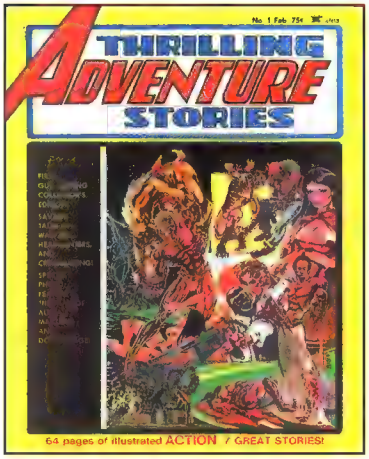
Western Action
V1#1 (Feb 1975)

Wulf the Barbarian
V1#1 (Feb 1975),
V1#2 (Apr 1975),
V1#3 (Jul 1975),
V1#4 (Sep 1975)

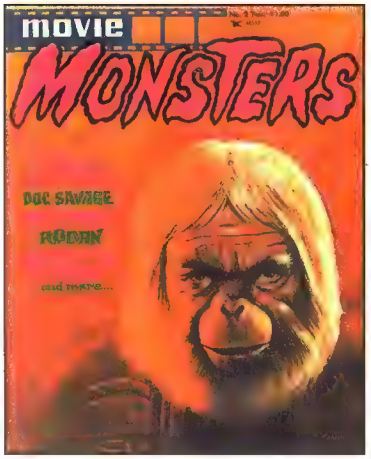
MAGAZINES

Devilina
V1#1 (Jan 1975),
V1#2 (May 1975);
PAGE 44
Thrilling Adv. Stries
V1#1 (Feb 1975),
V1#2 (Aug 1975);
Movie Monsters
V1#1 (Dec 1974),
V1#2 (Feb 1975),
V1#3 (Apr 1975),
V1#4 (Aug 1975);
Gothic Romances
V1#1 (Dec 1974,
rare);
Weird Tales
of the Macabre
V1#1 (Jan 1975),
V1#2 (Mar 1975)

ATLAS-SEABOARD MAGAZINES



THRILLING ADVENTURE STORIES
DEATH STALKS KROMAG THE KILLER in "THE VALLEY OF DINOSAURS"
THE WORLD'S MOST EXCITING MAGAZINE!



Atlas-Seaboard Artist Checklist

Jack Abel
Brute #3
Iron Jaw #1
Morlock 2001 #1, 2
Western Action #1

Neal Adams
Ironjaw #2
Planet of the Vampires #1, 2
Thrilling Adv. Stories #2

Dan Adkins
Cougar #1

Sal Amendola
Phoenix #1
Phoenix #2, 3
Wulf the Barbarian #4

Terry Austin
Phoenix #4

Pat Boyette
Blazing Battle Tales #1
Weird Suspense #1,2,3
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1, 2,

Pat Broderick
Phoenix #3
Planet of the Vampires #1, 2

Rich Buckler
Cougar #2
Demon Hunter #1
Tales of Evil #3
Weird Suspense #3

Howard Chaykin
Scorpion #1, 2

Ernie Colon
Grim Ghost #1, 2, 3
Scorpion #2
Thrilling Adventure Stories #1
Tiger-Man #1
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1

Jim Craig
Hands of the Dragon #1
Scorpion #3
Wulf the Baroarian #4

Steve Ditko
Destructor #1, 2, 3, 4
Morlock 2001 #3
Tiger-Man #2, 3

Leo Duranona
Devilina #1
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1

Ric Estrada
Devilina #1, 2
Phoenix #4

Frank Giacoia
Phoenix #4

Dick Giordano
Morlock 2001 #1

Jerry Grandenetti
Tales of Evil #1, 2

Larry Hama
Wulf the Barbarian #1, 2

Russ Heath
Grim Ghost #3
Planet of Vampires #3
Thrilling Adventure Stories #1, 2

Klaus Janson
Wulf the Barbarian #1, 2

John Severin
Blazing Battle Tales #1
Thrilling Adventure Stories #2
Weird Tales of the Macabre #2

Jeff Jones
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1

Larry Lieber
Destructor #1, 2
Tales of Evil #1
Tiger-Man #3

Pablo Marcos
Barbarians #1
Brute #1, 2, 3
Devilina #1
Ironjaw #2, 3, 4

Frank McLaughlin
Planet of the Vampires #1, 2

Al McWilliams
Blazing Battle Tales #1
Police Action #1, 2, 3
Savage Combat Tales #1

Al Milgrom
Cougar #2
Destructor #4
Morlock 2001 #1, 2
Tiger-Man #3
Western Action #1

Mike Ploog
Police Action #1, 2, 3

Pulojar
Devilina #1

Ralph Reese
Devilina #1

Badia Romero
Tales of Evil #3
Weird Tales of the Macabre #2

Mike Sekowsky
Brute #1, 2
Iron Jaw #1
Police Action #1, 2, 3
Tales of Evil #1

Walter Simonson
Thrilling Adv. Stories #2

Jack Sparling
Blazing Battle Tales #1
Devilina #1, 2
Savage Combat Tales #1
Tales of Evil #2
Thrilling Adventure Stories #1, 2

Frank Springer
Cougar #1, 2
Police Action #1, 2, 3

Leo Summers
Devilina #1, 2
Thrilling Adv. Stories #1
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1, 2
Wulf the Baroarian #3

Suso
Devilina #2

Tom Sutton
Tales of Evil #2

Frank Thorne
Blazing Battle Tales #1
Devilina #2
Fright #1
Thrilling Adv. Stories #1

George Torjussen
Devilina #2

Ramon Torrents
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1

Alex Toth
Thrilling Adv. Stories #2

Boris Valejo
Weird Tales of the Macabre #2

Villanova
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1

Mike Vosburg
Tales of Evil #3

Alan Weiss
Brute #3

Doug Wildey
Western Action #1

Wally Wood
Destructor #1, 2

Berni Wrightson
Morlock 2001 #3

Xirinius
Weird Tales of the Macabre #2

NOTE: Artists for some of the following covers remain unconfirmed. If you can aid in the identification of the artists, please contact CBM.

Barbarians #1
Brute #1, 2
Cougar #1
Destructor #3, 4
Ironjaw #1, 2
Morlock 2001 #2, 3
Phoenix #1, 2, 3, 4
Police Action #1, 2, 3
Tales of Evil #2
Targitt #1, 2, 3
Tiger-Man #2
Weird Suspense #1, 2
Western Action #1
Wulf the Baroarian #1,2,3,4

Atlas-Seaboard Writer Checklist

John Albano
Blazing Battle Tales #1
Devilina #2
Planet of the Vampires #2, 3
Tales of Evil #2
Thrilling Adventure Stories #1, 2, 3

Pat Boyette
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1, 2

Michael Cahlin
Devilina #1

Marvin Channing
Tales of Evil #2

Howard Chaykin
Scorpion #1, 2

Ernie Colon
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1

Gerry Conway
Destructor #4
Tiger-Man #2, 3

Ric Estrada
Devilina #1

Ed Fedory
Hands of the Dragon #1

Michael Fleisher
Iron Jaw #1, 2, 3
Morlock 2001 #1, 2
Brute #1, 2
Grim Ghost #1, #2
Weird Suspense #1, 2

Gary Friedrich
Barbarians #1
Fright #1
Iron Jaw #4
Morlock 2001 #3
Phoenix #4
Police Action #2, 3
Tales of Evil #3 (T. Isabella & R. Buckler get plot credit)
Brute #3
Cougar #2
Weird Suspense #3

Mike Friedrich
Wulf the Barbarian #4

Augustine Funnell
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1

Archie Goodwin
Savage Combat Tales #1
Destructor #1, 2, 3
Thrilling Adventure Stories #2

Larry Hama
Planet of Vampires #1
Wulf the Barbarian #1, 2

Russ Heath
Thrilling Adv. Stories #1

Tony Isabella
Grim Ghost #3

Russ Jones
Tales of Evil #1, 2

George Kashdan
Weird Tales of the Macabre #2

David Anthony Kraft
Demon-Hunter #1 (R. Buckler gets plot credit)

Gabriel Levy
Devilina #1
Phoenix #2, 3
Tales of Evil #3
The Scorpion #3
Thrilling Adventure Stories #1 (with Jack Sparling), #2
Tiger Man #1 (credited on bullpen page, not in story)
Weird Tales of the Macabre #2

Larry Lieber
Western Action #1

Richard (Rick) Meyers
Thrilling Adventure Stories #2

Steve Mitchell
Cougar #1
Thrilling Adventure Stories #2

Al Moniz
Weird Tales of the Macabre #2

Martin Pasko
Devilina #1
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1

Mike Ploog
Police Action #1

Jeff Rovin
Phoenix #1
Thrilling Adventure Stories #1

Steve Skeates
Western Action #1
Wulf the Barbarian #3, 4

Jack Sparling
Thrilling Adventure Stories #1 (with Gabe Levy)

Leo Summers
Weird Tales of the Macabre #2

Ramon Torrents
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1

Villanova
Weird Tales of the Macabre #1

Jack Younger
Police Action #1
Tales of Evil #1

Irv Novick

SPANNING THE HISTORY OF THE INDUSTRY

IRV NOVICK

INTERVIEW BY JOHN COATES

I was first introduced to Irv Novick's art through his work on DC's Flash. For me (and a generation of Bronze Age comic lovers like me) Mr. Novick's 65+ issue run on the Scarlet Speedster… which spans the entire Bronze decade from September 1970 through February 1979… was the definitive Flash. It was only later that I discovered that Mr. Novick's career in comics spanned the history of the industry itself!

From his groundbreaking work in co-creating MLJ's star character "The Shield" in the 1940s… to his work on DC's war books of the 1950s (as part of Robert Kanigher's famed stable of artists)… to his vastly underrated stint on Batman in the 1960s and early 1970s… Novick's work has a professionalism that set standards at every level.

His use of blacks, perspective, and line work are legendary among his peers… that's why Mr. Novick is considered "an artist's, artist" by all in the industry that have known him.

And after you read this interview dear *CBM* reader, I think you'll agree!

JOHN COATES: *Mr. Novick, before we begin I'd like to thank you for agreeing to this interview.*

IRV NOVICK: Mr. "Who," John? Hey, rule number one is that you can't call me "Mr. Novick." My name is Irv. [*Laughter*]

JOHN: *Yes, Sir. Let's begin…*

IRV: Who's this "sir" guy, John? Call me Irv, ok?

JOHN: *Forgive me. The curse of being brought up in the south* [Laughter]. *Now, let's begin with your family background.*

IRV: Well, I was born in New York City on April 11, 1916. My father was in the fur business and fairly wealthy. He had about 100 people working for him. He was a good businessman and a good father.

He even made money during the Depression, which was quite a feat. My mother was a very thoughtful, loving person. She always encouraged us to read when we were young and both of them were very supportive of us getting an education. My mother used to read to us… and we learned to read even before we were taught to do so in school.

As far as my first interest in drawing, my mother used to say that I scratched her womb with a pencil! [*Laughter*]. My art inspirations were many… Alex Raymond, Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Winslow Homer, the classics, some contemporary artists, every day life, etc….

If you're an artist you're going to be influenced by a good many people and things. Anyone who says otherwise is a liar… or a fool!

JOHN: *Did your family support your decision to be an artist?*

IRV: Oh yes. However, I do remember that my mother's brother used to drag me down to the hospital to watch surgery. He thought I was going to go to medical school, but I took the exam for the National Academy of Design in NYC instead. Boy, was he surprised! [*Laughter*]

JOHN: *What was the academy like?*

IRV: The Academy was like a four year college but they didn't give out degrees. No art schools gave degrees in those days. However, after four years many graduates taught at universities without a Masters Degree and without taking education classes. Anyway, to get in you had to first pass an art examination. If you passed, they would then make you come back and ask you to draw from casts/statues for about two weeks. If they still liked your work, then they offered you a scholarship. Around 1933, I received a four year scholarship and an additional year for my Masters class. We were affiliated with Columbia University so we could take advantage of many of their resources.

JOHN: *What was your first professional assignment?*

IRV: While at the academy, I saw an ad on the school bulletin board for someone to do "Showcards" for an importing company which had consignment space in most of the large department stores throughout the country.

Irv Novick

The "Showcard" was part of a department store floor display that showed a woman, usually a beautiful woman, well, *always* a beautiful woman, using what ever kitchen gadget the display was presenting. For example, a beautiful woman would be shown in a kitchen using a potato peeler, and an actual potato peeler would be attached to the "Showcard."

Anyway, while at the academy I had seen this ad on the bulletin board. The only problem was that it requested the artist be a girl. Well, I called anyway and this guy who was obviously a Frenchman answered and protested, [Irv is using a heavy, mock French accent] "...But yeou are not ze gerl!" [*Laughter*] I said that's 'OK', let me bring my work in to show you. He liked it and hired me immediately.

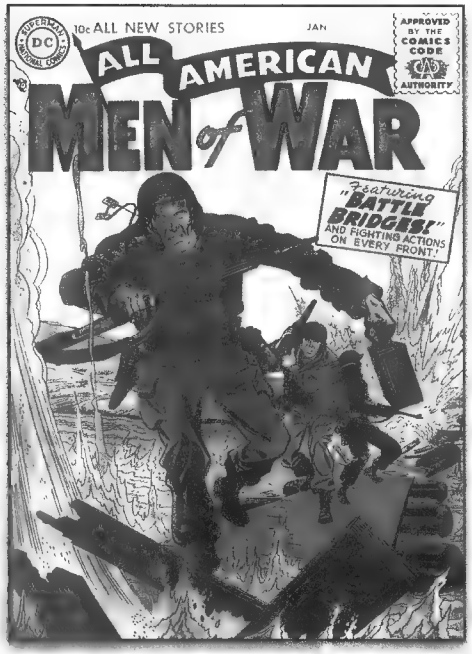
JOHN: *I bet you're were excited.*

IRV: Very excited. This was in my second year at the academy and I was only 17 years old. That job paid me close to $65 a week... which in the Depression was a lot of money. I saw them in "Lord and Taylor's, Macy's, etc... After a while, the company began asking me to not only draw the "Showcards" but to also design the actual floor displays. They paid me very well for that too. I worked on that for about four years, or until I graduated from the art academy.

JOHN: *How did you become interested in comic books?*

IRV: Well, I graduated from the academy in 1938 and had seen an ad in the New York Times newspaper for artists to draw comic books. Being that the industry was still in its infancy, I had never heard of a comic book, never seen one, didn't know what it was other than it meant work. I showed them my "Showcard" art and they hired me right away. This was with Harry Chesler's outfit. At first, I worked in his shop but eventually moved to working freelance from my home. Working in the office was pleasant but I preferred working at my own pace, on my own time. I've always been a night person. I like to work at night when everyone else has gone to bed. I never went to bed before two o'clock.

An amazing number of DC Big Five war books feature Irv Novick covers, including these two All-American Men of War gems... #29 (Jan 1956), and #82 (Nov/Dec 1960) which introduced Johnny Cloud, the Navajo Ace


10¢ ALL NEW STORIES
JAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
ALL AMERICAN
MEN of WAR
featuring "BATTLE BRIDGES!" AND FIGHTING ACTIONS ON EVERY FRONT!

JOHN: *How long did you work for Harry Chesler?*

IRV: A few years, I believe. At the time, MLJ was buying most of the work being produced from Chesler's studio. MLJ was a publishing house founded by Morris Coyne, Louis Silberkleit, and John Goldwater. Anyway, after a while, Louis came to me and asked if I could work directly for them. They wanted me to work on a character called The Shield. They were paying more money than Chesler, so I did. I think this was around 1940.

JOHN: *Did MLJ have a ready made character when you arrived?*

IRV: Well, they had an idea for a hero that was based on the patriot theme. From their initial idea, I designed the costume and created his character... a G-man. Once I had defined and created the character, Harry Shorten was brought in to write and edit the stories. I believe The Shield was the first patriotic hero. He appeared in *PEP Comics*.

JOHN: *Were you at all excited or surprised when it became a hit?*

IRV: I tell you, to me it was just a character and a job and that was it. I tried to do it to the best of my abilities. That's it!

JOHN: *What was the creative process at MLJ?*

IRV: Well, MLJ provided me with a script and I penciled and inked it. If I wanted to change things in the story they were always open to it.

JOHN: *While at MLJ, there were other artists of note. Let me toss out a few names. Charles Biro?*

IRV: Yes, Charlie Biro was a pretty big guy, overweight, a real heavy set type. At the time, the MLJ office was located on the 8th floor of the New York Telegraph building on Hudson St. I remember Charlie would always challenge me to all kinds of things when I came into the office. I never knew why [*Laughter*]. For instance, he would bet me that if I took the elevator up and he raced the stairs, he could beat me. Well, I thought it was worth it to see him drop dead when we reached the top so I accepted! He almost did drop dead [*Laughter*]. But you know, he did beat me!

JOHN: *Mort Meskin?*

IRV: Mort was a very fine person. An excellent artist, too. During my time at MLJ, Mort and I were very close. We had planned to get a studio togeth-

er down in the village but we never found the right place.

We kept in touch for quite a while but then he up and disappeared on me. It was quite some time before I saw him again. I believe it was the 1960s when we met again while at an advertising agency. You just lose track. Unfortunately, he died in 1995.

JOHN: *Bob Wood?*

IRV: Yes, Bob was an 'ok' guy but I think he was sent away to prison for a while for shooting someone. I can't remember for what exactly but I do know he was sent to prison for awhile.

JOHN: *I read somewhere that he had shot his wife. How about Jack Binder?*

IRV: Jack was a nice guy but some people didn't like him… I don't know why because I liked him. Since Jack was paying for the work he demanded quality. I had no problem with that.

JOHN: *Bob Montana?*

IRV: Bob created the character Archie… which is what MLJ is called today… Archie Comics. I thought Bob was a very fine person but somehow MLJ took the rights to Archie. Bob later took them to court and won. Now I understand that there is another suit going on where John Goldwater is claiming that he created the character. That's not how I remember it though. I was in the office when Bob walked in with that character and presented it to MLJ… My recollection is that Goldwater did not create the character, Bob did.

JOHN: *How long did you work with MLJ?*

IRV: I continued to work with MLJ throughout the war. After being drafted in 1943, I was stationed in Mississippi for a year and half. From there, I was stationed in Fort Knox, KY for two more years until 1946. I never saw combat because when the Army sent me to Officers Candidate School, they re-examined me and found I had a heart murmur.

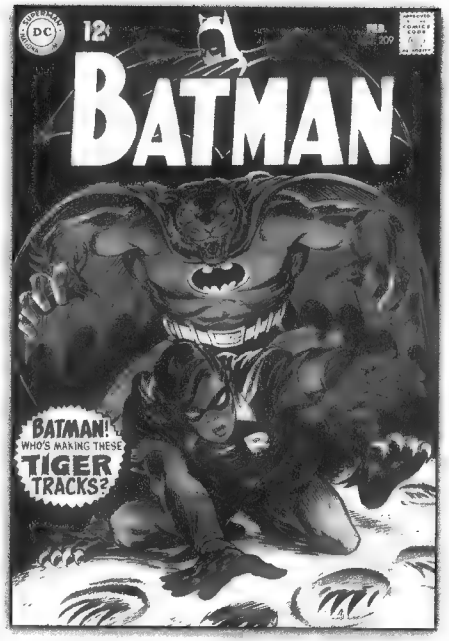
The examining doctors said, "How did you even get in the Army in the first place?" I said, they needed warm bodies and they said I qualified! [*Laughter*] I told them I had a heart murmur but the doctor at the entrance exam ignored it. I got it as a child when I had rheumatic fever.

Anyway, during this time, MLJ would send me work at the army base. Instead of playing cards like all the other guys did, I sat on my bunk and drew comic books.

Sometimes the guys would stop playing cards for a minute or so, come by and look over my shoulder, ask questions, and then go back to playing cards. If any of the guys read my books, I never knew. At the end of each month, I would get this check from MLJ. Somebody from HQ always opened my mail because you could see the that it contained a check. Army pay being what it was, everybody on base was trying to borrow money from me. I was very popular, if you know what I mean. Some did borrow money, though I never got paid back. That was the end of that! [*Laughter*].

JOHN: *How did you come to work at DC Comics?*

IRV: After being discharged from the Army in 1946, I met Bob Kanigher. At the time he was a writer and editor for DC Comics. I met him at Irwin Hasen's apartment. I had known Irwin since our days as artists at Chesler and MLJ. Anyway, years earlier when working for MLJ, Bob had called me on the phone, introduced himself, and told me he was hired to do a story for MLJ's Steel Sterling, for one of their books.



In an environment of declining sales, Novick's work re-energized some of DC's main titles, including Batman (#209 above)

At this point, I had never met him. But he dictated the story to me over the phone, and I drew it. He was so concise, so complete in his descriptions that I didn't have to write it down. I simply drew it from memory. Bob remembered this when we met again in Irwin's apartment and offered me a freelance job.

I think my first work for Bob was on one of the love or war comics. Bob was a heck of a writer. He had a keen sense of telling a story. Very imaginative. We worked on a number of characters; Johnny Cloud, Sgt. Rock, Captain Storm, Haunted tank, and a few others… and we are still firm friends.

JOHN: *Then you left DC in 1950 for a newspaper strip?*

IRV: No… I still worked for DC freelance. I was approached by the McClure Newspaper syndicate to develop a new daily strip. Harry Shorten, with whom I had worked at MLJ, and I created a comic strip called *Cynthia*. It was a soap opera type of daily, similar to *Mary Worth* but this was long before that strip. After a year, Harry left because he didn't like the grind of a daily newspaper strip and gave me his share of the strip.

I did it for five more years until around 1956 even though I had originally signed a ten year contract with McClure. I asked to be let out. Harry was right! It just got to be too much.

You see at the same time as I was doing *Cynthia*, and still freelancing for DC Comics, I was also doing monthly work for *Boys Life* magazine. The Boy Scout magazine had continuities each month, which were ongoing strips in newspaper strip format. I was doing one called "Bible Stories" and "Pedro Patrol."

The highly collectible Pep Comics #1 (Jan 1940) features the debut of Novick's patriotic hero, The Shield

Irv Novick

Pedro was a boy scout who got into different adventures while the Bible story series re-told Bible stories. I was also illustrating stories for *Boys Life*, and *Amazing Stories*, a digest-size science fiction anthology magazine published by Ziff-Davis… it was pulp before I got to it.

JOHN: *After leaving* Cynthia, *did you continue your work in advertising, along with your work for DC Comics?*

IRV: Oh, yes. I've always kept my hand in advertising in some fashion. However, in 1960 I was getting very tired of the comic book industry and left it all together to work in advertising full-time. I had seen this ad in the newspaper about an advertising job, took up my samples and was hired. Some of the managers were even familiar with my comic book work, which helped.

When I went to work, I found that Mort Meskin was working in the same office! At that time, we hadn't seen each other in about 15 years, or since the mid-1940s at MLJ. It was good working with him again.

Anyway, the job was to do storyboards for television shows and it paid fairly well. After two days, I became art director. About this same time, Irwin Donenfield (who was the son of Harry Donenfield, the owner of DC Comics), came to me with a counter offer that included a pension, and all sorts of perks to come back to DC. Since I was in the driver's seat, I asked him for all kinds of things. [*Laughter*]. The least of which was a page rate increase and the right to work at home.

Though I went back to National, part of my contract was that I could still freelance in advertising, etc… I remember that I did the Hasbro G.I. Joe toy advertisements for the comic books. These were ads that would show the kids playing with the various dolls, posing them, using their imagination, etc….

JOHN: *You did those? I never knew! About your contract, the fact that a comic book artist in 1960 received a contract is amazing. From what I understand, most comic book houses did not treat their artists very well in those days.*

IRV: I can't speak for other artists but DC was good to me. At the time, I had decided to go back to college and get my masters in history. Also, I was teaching history to adult night classes during this time. The stability of working again at DC under these conditions was welcomed.

JOHN: *Let me get this straight, you were working freelance for DC, a student getting his masters in history, and a part-time teacher?*

IRV: Yes, but I collapsed from trying to get my Ph.D. [*Laughter*]. No really, I've always held high the value of a good education. The Ph.D. would have been nice but enough was enough! [*Laughter*] By this time, I had a degree in history, sociology and a masters in history. Between work, teaching and working on my masters, I hardly got any sleep!

JOHN: *What was the creative process like at DC?*

IRV: Well, at first I would pencil and ink but they kept giving me so much work that I had to sacrifice the inking. Bob [Kanigher] supplied the script. I never had to change the scripts. Bob was that good so I never had to. My favorite character that we did together would have to be Silent Knight in the early *Brave and the Bold* issues.

JOHN: *That's a highly sought-after series. Could we play the "name game" again. Joe Kubert?*

IRV: Joe is a wonderful artist. When he started his school in New Jersey, he wanted me to come work for him but I live up in the Westchester area of New York and could not see driving down to New Jersey every day.

JOHN: *Neal Adams?*

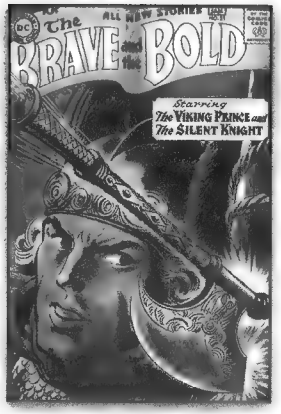
IRV: I have a story about Neal. As I was just about to leave *Cynthia* around 1956, I was working with an advertising firm that did comic book type advertising for various companies… Ford, Chrysler, etc., you know. These were continuities, that were given away at the car company. Again, continuities were stories in comic strip format that advertised products. Anyway, while working with this agency, a guy by the name of Neal Adams came up to look for work. I directed him up to DC. I thought he would be quite good at comic books, and he was! Neal is a very good artist.

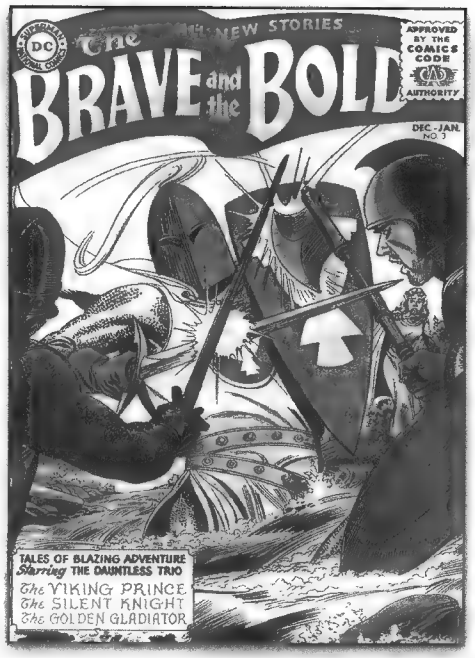
JOHN: *Russ Heath.*

IRV: Russ was a darn good artist. I never really socialized with him though.

Novick's newspaper strip, Cynthia, has been praised by many industry colleagues for its use of "blacks" (black ink brushwork). In the installment below (released Nov 21, 1949), note the Irving Novick signature at the bottom of the easel in panel 2

I'M SURE FLYING HIGH – RIGHT UP THERE, CLOSE TO THE SUN! ONLY TROUBLE IS, I HAVE TO DELIVER THE GOODS!
THEY'VE GIVEN ME EVERYTHING A DRESS DESIGNER NEEDS! THEY'RE WAITING FOR A NEW DRESS DESIGN! OH, IF MARION ONLY KNEW WHAT I'VE DONE….
MARION! OF COURSE! MARION'S DESIGNS GOT ME INTO THIS – NOW LET THEM KEEP THE POT BOILING!





Some of the best covers in the Brave & Bold run are Novick classics... including #21 (Jan 1959, a highly collectible, grey-tone)... and #3 (Dec/Jan 1956)

JOHN: *Paul Reinman.*

IRV: Paul was a pretty bright guy, an intellectual. We used to have long, deep discussions about art, politics and the like.

JOHN: *Bob Kanigher eventually left DC and Julie Schwartz became your new editor. How was Julie's style of editing different from Bob's?*

IRV: It was very different! I enjoyed working for Julie, and don't want to knock him, but Bob was an original artist, an original writer. He always knew what he wanted the story to say and how to accomplish it. Julie never really created anything and would just give me a story and that was it. After Julie, I began working for Paul Levitz. Paul later became a Vice President at DC. When I first began working with Paul, I thought he had ability but he did not have a college degree. I urged him to go back to college and work for a business administration degree and he finally did. I told him to get the firm to pay for it... and they did!

JOHN: *Who were some of your favorite inkers?*

IRV: Well, Joe Giella was very good and now does the syndicated newspaper strip, *Mary Worth*. In fact, he called me about two years ago to ghost on *Mary* for him. His mother was very ill and he needed the break. Joe and I have always gotten along well.

Another fine inker and artist was Dick Giordano. He moved up pretty fast in the editorial section, as I'm sure you know. Frank McLaughlin was also very good. He inked much of my work and followed my pencils very well.

I believe the penciler should give the inker very precise, tight drawings. I used a #2 and a #F pencil. A number #2 was nice but the lead tended to be too soft and to smudge. As you draw, invariably your hand is going to rub the pencils. The #F pencil was basically a number #2 but the lead tended to be sharper and not smudge as much. I always liked a clean, clear penciled page.

JOHN: *In the late '60s, Carmine Infantino became the publisher at DC Comics. Did this change affect your work?*

IRV: For me it didn't change much from when Harry Donenfield had been publisher. Carmine and I always got along well and respected one another. I do remember that I always wanted to change Batman's costume. I would always make his cowl ears longer and use more blacks than had been used on the character in recent years. I felt that character should have a dark tone, a dark appearance. I don't know whether Carmine approved or not, but I continued to change Batman's appearance.

JOHN: *I agree. Your dark tones is one of the many aspects of your Batman that I like. Your blacks seem to enhance the character and make him appear a darker figure, as opposed to simply blacking out the figure of keeping him in the shadows. You do know you're considered one of "the" batman artists?*

IRV: Thank you. But I must tell you that it's the first time I've ever been considered a "the" in anything. I'm not quite sure I'm up to it!

JOHN: *How long did you work at DC?*

IRV: Until 1986. Throughout this time, I had also continued

LET'S SEE IF OUR GENIUS HAS SOMETHING STARTLING TO SHOW US, CYNTHIA!
WE'LL NEED A STARTLING DESIGN TO PULL FASHION MAGAZINE OUT OF ITS CIRCULATION SLUMP!
YES-CIRCULATION IS PRETTY ANEMIC!
ANEMIC? IF IT GETS ANY LOWER THE ONLY READERS LEFT WILL BE YOU AND ME! MARION'S OUR ONLY HOPE!
GULP
MARION, WE — PAUL! SHE'S NOT HERE!
HMM... OUR LITTLE BIRD HAS FLOWN THE GILDED CAGE. SHE LEFT THIS NOTE — SOUNDS PRETTY SOUR TO ME.

Irv Novick

to work in advertising. But in 1986 I officially retired from it all. The last work I did for DC Comics was a Superman issue. Even after I retired I still kept getting assignments for DC. Plus I was getting a pension so that was nice.

JOHN: *Do you keep up with the comic market today?*

IRV: No, but I do keep in touch with Bob Kanigher. Outside of comics, he's written books, poetry, and plays. He is very talented and very prolific… a true Renaissance man! He lives nearby so we keep in close contact.

Anyway, I enjoyed the work, but I would never really look at the comics themselves. Back in the 1940s, I remember every month MLJ would send me stacks of comic books and I would just set them aside or store them in the attic. When we moved up to Westchester in 1960 into the house my wife and I had built…

JOHN: *Don't say it, you threw them away?*

IRV: Yes, I threw them out; Steel Sterling, *Zip Comics, Pep Comics*, all of that stuff.

JOHN: *Ouch! That hurts! [Laughter]*

IRV: You're telling me? [*Laughter*] I didn't know what the things were worth, they were just in the way. Who knew? I was just thinking of the house I was building. It took five years between 1955 and 1960.

JOHN: *Impressive. I could not imagine building my own home.*

IRV: I always enjoyed doing carpentry, plumbing, electrical wiring and all kinds of construction work. I was fortunate to have these as hobbies, considering I was building my house! My favorite hobby now is walking. I'm a pretty fast walker and that keeps me thinking young. Doesn't keep me young, though!

JOHN: *Do you have any children?*

IRV: Yes, four. One son and three daughters. I also have four wonderful grandchildren.

JOHN: *Growing up, how did your children feel about you drawing comics?*

IRV: Oddly enough, they never read comics. I mean the comics were there, all over the house so they could have read them but they didn't. Some of their friends did, though. They would come over and were enamored with me drawing comics. I would give them some comics. I guess my drawing was somewhat influential on my children because one's an engineer and the other was a fashion designer.

JOHN: *You attended your first comic book convention, the 1995 San Diego Con, a few years ago. What was your impression of the convention?*

IRV: I was taken aback by the whole experience. I was stopped every ten feet because I had to wear a name tag. Just to walk down to the DC Comics booth, which was only across the convention room, seemed to take hours. I was surprised at the amount of people and industry professionals who told me they were inspired by my work. Inspired, no less! [*Laughter*] I found it flattering but a bit awkward. The fans knew more about my work than I did! I was never a fan about anything. It was a new experience for me.

JOHN: *Were you embarrassed… or did you enjoy it?*

IRV: Well, John, I've never been embarrassed in my life. What's it like? [*Laughter*] Really, since they paid the way for me and my wife, and set us up in the Marriot for five days, yes, I think you could say it was a good experience! [*Laughter*]. Seriously though, I did get the opportunity to become reacquainted with guys I had not seen in years. Julie Schwartz was there but I didn't recognize him at first. He came walking up to me in the hotel lobby and said he had just finished talking to my daughter.

My daughter is a consultant for QVC TV and was there working. Anyway, I didn't recognize him. Julie used to be quite heavy but is now very skinny. It was very good talking to Julie again. Gil Kane was there, as well. You know he has had cancer but is in remission. I hope he's doing well. I also met Will Eisner. I had never met Will prior to the convention but of course knew of his work. The whole experience brought back a lot of good memories.

JOHN: *And about all your old comic books commanding those high prices?*

IRV: Well, whatever they can get for them, it's good. I don't really have an opinion. The books I do have I've willed to my children, along with all of my original art that I've kept over the years.

JOHN: *How about another convention?*

IRV: No, I think once is enough. Everyone was very nice but it's just not me. I'm not good at that sort of thing.

JOHN: *Any future plans to draw comics again?*

IRV: Not really, I like being retired. But I'll always continue to paint and draw. It's in my blood.

JOHN: *It was really a pleasure speaking with you.*

IRV: Well, John, it was a pleasure speaking with you too… and give my best to *CBM* readers as well

Novick's talent for design and illustration blossomed early… so by the 1940s he was in demand by both the magazine and comic book industries. In the rare photograph above, Novick demonstrates his flair for advertising layouts, composition and form, and drawing beautiful women

Photo-Journals!!

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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF
"THE FULLER BRUSH MAN"
...a hilarious new movie
from the same studio!
COLUMBIA PICTURES
presents
JACK CARSON
as The Good Humor Man
Lola Jean George Peter Frank
ALBRIGHT · WALLACE · REEVES · MILES · FERGUSON
AN S. SYLVAN SIMON PRODUCTION · DIRECTED BY LLOYD BACON

Incredibly, actor George Reeves (who starred as Superman on the 1950's TV series) played a supporting role in The Good Humor Man, the not-so-successful 1940's Jack Carson comedy film

Niatpac Levram!

BY JEFF GELB

Quick—can you name a movie that co-starred Captain Marvel and Superman? Stumped you, huh? Well, that's not surprising, since not too many comics fans have ever seen—or even heard of... *The Good Humor Man.*

But as a lifelong fan of Captain Marvel, I'd heard about a movie from the early '50s that somehow featured the character—not the Big Red Cheese himself, but his fictional comics counterpart. What was it all about?

For years—nay, decades—I watched for the movie to show up late at night on TV, to no avail. I tried ordering it from various video outlets—again, no luck. It appeared that I was doomed to never know the secrets of that lost movie.

Meanwhile, as a Captain Marvel comics collector, I had found a copy of the rare *Captain Marvel and The Good Humor Man* comic book one-shot, a Fawcett Publication from 1950. The comic book is 32 pages, full color, with a 10¢ price tag. The comic book is capped off with a back cover house ad for the other Fawcett titles, which leads me to believe that the book was also used as a giveaway, probably by the Good Humor ice cream truck vendors.

This is truly one of the oddest comic books ever to be published. In it, Billy Batson and Captain Marvel interact with real world directors and actors in a storyline that does not mirror that of "The Good Humor Man," but plays off it for an all-new storyline featuring the same characters.

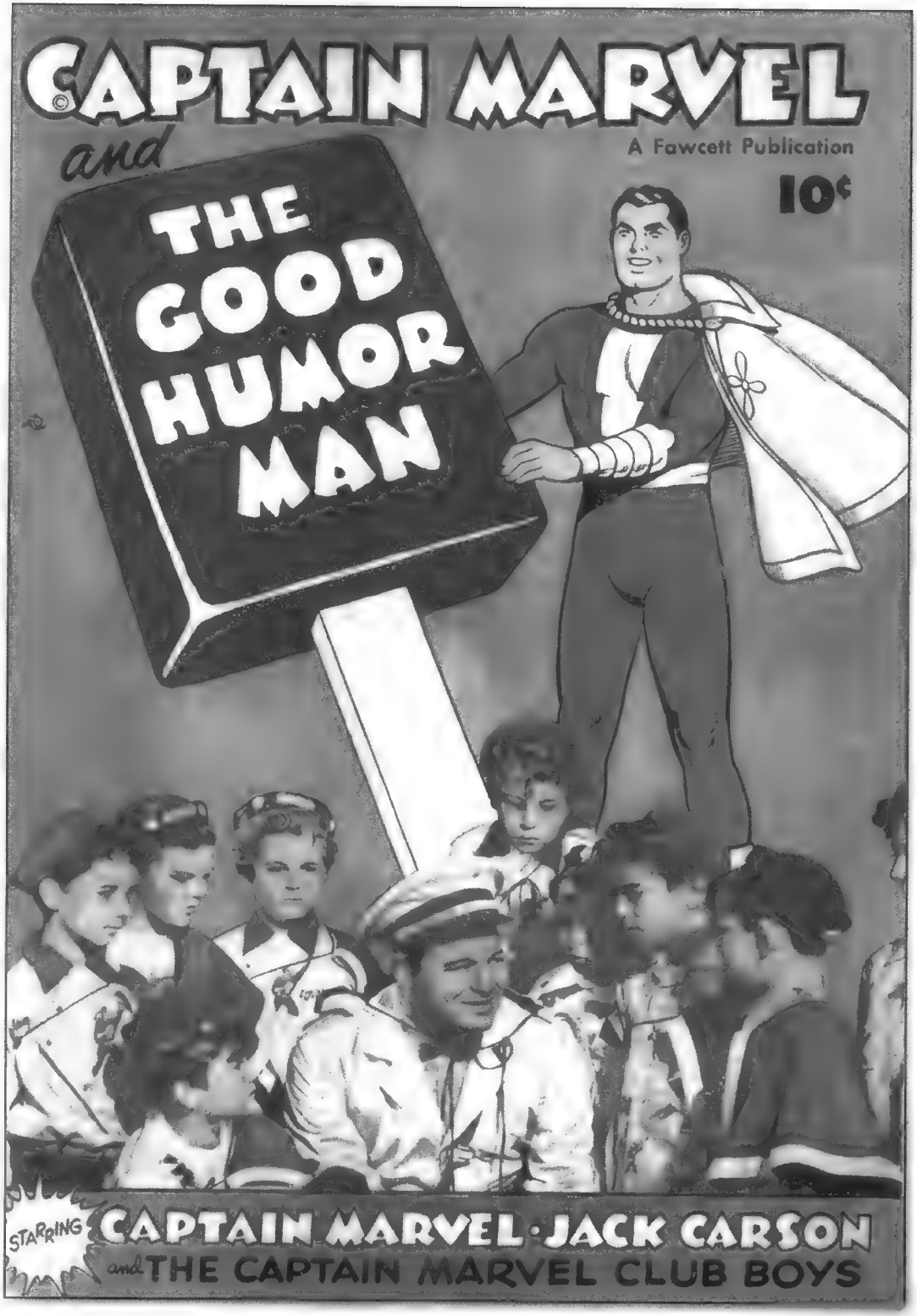
In the comics story, nicely illustrated by CM vet Pete Costanza, Captain Marvel is asked by the movie's actual director Lloyd Bacon to come to the set of the movie, to act as a consultant! When he shows up at Columbia studios, he is introduced to the director and the movie's star, Jack Carson. Soon Cap is embroiled in a mystery as thieves steal the Good Humor truck from the set, using the truck to haul away stolen payroll from the studio. Realities clash as the confused Captain Marvel, giving chase, keeps interrupting filming on various sets.

Meanwhile, the crooks discover they have actually stolen "stage money," so they return to the studio to try and grab the real cash. Captain Marvel enlists the aid of the actual young actor of the "Good Humor Man," Peter Miles, and the other young "Captain Marvel Club Boys" to try and locate the crooks. Along the way, Billy Batson impersonates Miles and the crooks use various stage props to foil their pursuers, in the process generally trashing the studios. But ultimately, the Captain Marvel Club Boys, Jack Carson, and Captain Marvel himself save the day, and the studios' cash.

It's as bizarre a comics story as has ever been written, but no more so than the movie itself, which I finally tracked down recently through a dealer of rare video. Critic Leonard Maltin described the movie as "rambunctious antics with Carson in title role, getting involved in murder plot; aided by gang of 'Captain Marvel Kids,'" and gave it two and-a-half stars (out of a possible four). I think he was being kind.

The movie stars Jack Carson, a poor man's Red Skelton, and in fact the movie was billed as "the hilarious successor to 'The Fuller Brush Man,'" which starred Skelton. Carson has a rubbery, expressive face but little else to suggest he had any of the comedic skills of Skelton. He brings little charisma to his portrayal of Good Humor driver Biff Jones, who falls in love with a woman who is also being courted by a detective, played by George Reeves! That's right—in what was probably one of his last movie roles before donning the Superman costume for TV, Reeves co-stars in a movie where Captain Marvel takes center stage.

Carson, in a series of what are supposedly comedic mishaps (but which fall flat), gets involved with a femme fatale who is supposedly killed and then is framed for her murder. He hides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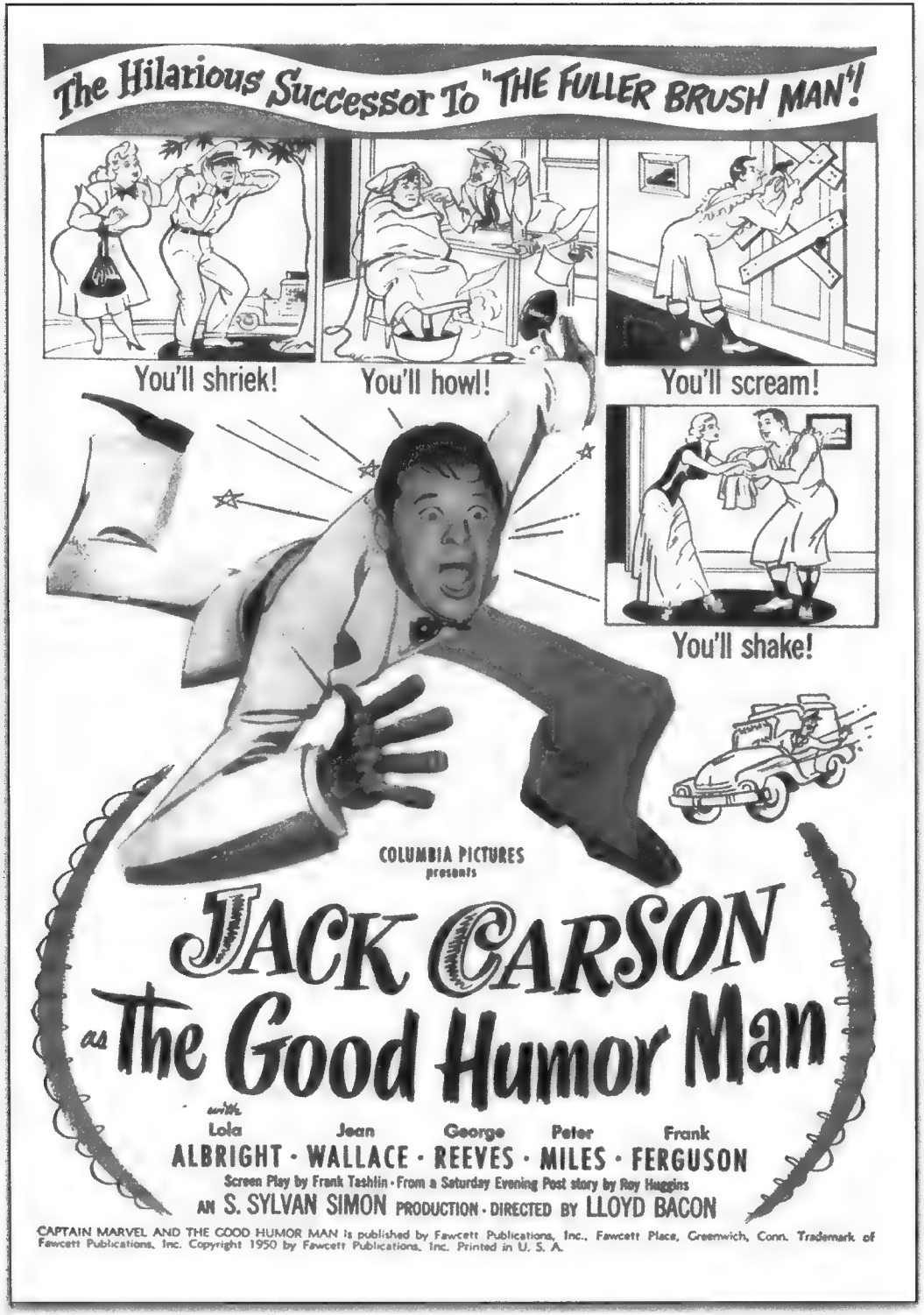
10¢
THE GOOD HUMOR MAN
STARRING CAPTAIN MARVEL · JACK CARSON
and THE CAPTAIN MARVEL CLUB BOYS


The Hilarious Successor To "THE FULLER BRUSH MAN"!
You'll shriek!
You'll howl!
You'll scream!
You'll shake!
COLUMBIA PICTURES
presents
JACK CARSON
as The Good Humor Man
with
Lola ALBRIGHT · Jean WALLACE · George REEVES · Peter MILES · Frank FERGUSON
Screen Play by Frank Tashlin · From a Saturday Evening Post story by Roy Huggins
AN S. SYLVAN SIMON PRODUCTION · DIRECTED BY LLOYD BACON
CAPTAIN MARVEL AND THE GOOD HUMOR MAN is published by Fawcett Publications, Inc., Fawcett Place, Greenwich, Conn. Trademark of Fawcett Publications, Inc. Copyright 1950 by Fawcett Publications, Inc. Printed in U. S. A.

out with his ice cream buddies in the local Captain Marvel Fan Club, whose battle cry for some reason is not "Shazam!" but instead "Niatpac Levram" which is of course, Captain Marvel spelled backwards! I can't help but wonder—was Shazam copyrighted so they couldn't use it, or what?

Anyway, several car chases, men in women's clothing, accordions stuck between legs, dropped pants, heads caught in basketball hoops, pie fights, jail cells filled with prostitutes, and frozen bodies in ice cream trucks later (don't ask!), they succeed in rooting out the real criminals, and bringing them to justice.

If that description makes the movie sound funny, I have not done my job. Believe me when I say that you don't want or need to know more about the movie's storyline than I've just described. At 79 minutes, it's tough to sit through. In fact, it would be torture if not for that "Shazam" guy.

Speaking of the good Captain, while he never appears in the movie as a "real" character (it would have been great to have Carson dressed up as CM in a dream sequence, for instance), his presence is felt throughout the movie. In fact, it's the dozens of Marvel references that make the movie worth watching… once… for any comics fan. Certainly its murky murder mystery storyline isn't sufficiently thrilling, nor is its acting, or its broad, slapstick humor.

Ah, but those Captain Marvel references! If Fawcett writers had penned the screenplay, it couldn't contain many more Marvel mentions than it already does. The Captain Marvel Club boys even listen to a (sadly nonexistent) Captain Marvel radio show! Jack Carson is early on shown to be a comics reader. When a character asks Carson, "You read comic books?" Carson, like any proud comics fan retorts, "Everybody does!" He is quick to invoke Captain Marvel through the movie. At one point he has just kissed a woman and quips, "Captain Marvel rides again!" (A smarter screenwriter might have offered, "Captain Marvel flies again," but I digress.) When he is protecting the woman from crooks, he tells her how Captain Marvel once protected someone in a similar situation. When Carson is trying to figure his way out of a jam, he asks himself, "What would Captain Marvel do in a situation like this?"

In truth, in a real world, Carson would be locked up for failing to distinguish between fantasy and reality. Beyond the spoken references, visual references abound and are mouth-watering. The Captain Marvel Kids wear sweatshirts, beanies, and even capes emblazoned with images of the Big Red Cheese. Their clubhouse is decorated with Captain Marvel pennants, pictures, and comics. In fact, in one sequence, Carson falls asleep reading a copy of Captain Marvel comics, with a cover showing him being menaced by two monsters. Hard as I tried to find that cover in the outstanding *Gerber Photo-Journals*, the image eluded me. While it's hard to believe the movie studio went to the expense of creating a dummy comic book cover, it appears they did so! Carson carries that Captain Marvel comic in his back pocket, obviously unaware that he is ruining its collector value!

This bizarre mess of a movie was directed by Lloyd Bacon, who directed dozens of better films, including 1933's *Footlight Parade*, 1948's *Give My Regards to Broadway*, and 1949's *It Happens Every Spring*. *The Good Humor Man* costarred Lola Albright, and was written by Frank Tashlin. He adapted it from a *Saturday Evening Post* story called "Appointment with Fear" by respected mystery writer Roy Huggins, who couldn't have been too happy with what Hollywood did to his story.

FACING PAGE: The IFC of CM & TGHM features the film's one-sheet and the indicia. ABOVE: CM club members proudly display the magic word "Shazam"

As it is, I wonder what deal was made and who paid who, between Fawcett and Columbia, to produce this movie? Who did the movie benefit more—the comics publisher who hoped to reap the publicity benefit of a national release that talked incessantly about the star comics character? Or Columbia, who hoped every youngster who read Captain Marvel comics would flood the movie theater? For that matter, I wonder how successful the movie was. It's hard to imagine families flocking to see this, or guys on dates bringing their girls to see this movie in hopes of impressing them.

The biggest mystery, though, is why *The Good Humor Man* has been out of circulation for the better part of 50 years. I could find no answers, but my suspicion is that the movie became a part of the quagmire that was the lawsuit between DC and Fawcett, thus deemed unreleasable for decades, and then buried and forgotten till now. I'd sure like to see the movie made available again, if only so that comics fans could appreciate just how bizarre a flick it is. It ain't great; hell, it ain't even good. But it's sure fascinating!

In the meanwhile, repeat after me: "Niatpac Levram"!

Shelly Speaks!

Continued from page 25

ROGER: What happened after your discharge from the service?

SHELLY: After my discharge I went back to the All-American Group at Lafayette Street and tried to get the Hawkman feature back. But I could not get any work from Sheldon Mayer.

ROGER: What did Max Gaines have to say about that?

SHELLY: Well, I really didn't go in and interfere. In other words, I felt the editor is the guy who could give me work. I didn't think there was any point going over his head to the publisher and starting a fight.

So I said, "Don't you feel I should get Hawkman back?" And Mayer said, "No, we've got someone doing it just the way we like it, and that's the way it is." So from that point on, Sheldon Mayer and I did not have any kind of relationship. I was pretty POed about it.

You know, most artists that came back from the service got their work back again. In fact, you may remember how they used to tell you that you were supposed to get your old job back after you came out of the service.

ROGER: That's right. It was kind of an unwritten law back in those days.

SHELLY: Well I never got that [courtesy]. So then I went all over the place and I started working for different publishers. I did some work for the American Comics Group, also known as ACG. I think it was run by a fellow named Dick Hughes. I started working for him and he had an editor there, a fellow by the name of Bob Oskner, who was a very good cartoonist. Now he worked with Dick Hughes and Hughes was a writer. I think later on Bob Oskner did *I Love Lucy* for the newspapers. A man named Sangor was the publisher of ACG.

ROGER: This would have been around 1946 or 1947...

SHELLY: Yes. Around that time period. They were doing adventure stories as I recall. I don't remember their titles now.

ROGER: Do you remember an artist at ACG by the name of Ogden Whitney?

SHELLY: Yes. Ogden Whitney was great! I didn't know him that well. I may have met him one or twice, but I admired his work. I thought he had great style. ▶▶

Tales of the Supernatural!

Continued from page 25

"The Supernatural." I did manage to find a few related details. One of the things that I still find very puzzling is why "Vampires of the Bayous" turned out to be a Moon Girl story? It strikes me a bit odd that a superheroine like Moon Girl would be featured in a new comic that's supposed to be about horror! Perhaps Gaines felt that having Moon Girl featured in a story would attract established readers that might follow her adventures into the new horror genre.

"The Werewolf's Curse" by Larsen is a decent horror story and, interestingly enough, a caption in the last panel at the end of the story of page eight reads "Proof of a spine-tingling adventure in horror that will live forever in the annals of the supernatural."

Craig's "Zombie Terror" is a straightforward horror job that had long ago been declared EC's first venture into the genre of horror and considered a classic. It was even speculated by some writers that Craig had also authored the story. At least now we know who wrote EC's first horror story... writer Dick Kraus! Moldoff had met Kraus while working at Fawcett Publications, and apparently Kraus did other writing jobs for EC after the creation of *TOTS*.

"The Hanged Man's Revenge" is one of Howard Larsen's finest horror works and was very fitting for inclusion in *TOTS*.

Other identifiable anecdotes that relate to *TOTS* were found in *Haunt of Fear* #15 and 16 (actually #s 1 and 2) published respectively in May and July of 1950. *Haunt of Fear* was EC's third horror title... following quickly on the heels of *Crypt of Terror* and *Vault of Horror*. The last panel of page seven of the last story in Haunt of Fear #1 asks the readers to write in and vote for their favorite story. In listing all the stories in this issue, "The House of Horror" story is referred to as "a journey into the supernatural."

The Hanged Man's REVENGE
IN PRIMITIVE TIMES, IT WAS BELIEVED THAT A PERSON'S REFLECTION WAS HIS SOUL!—SO CAME ABOUT THE SUPERSTITION THAT WHEN A DYING MAN SAW HIS REFLECTION IN A MIRROR, HIS SPIRIT WOULD ENTER ANOTHER BODY! WELL!—READ THIS HARROWING TALE OF A SCIENTIST'S GENIUS AND A KILLER'S LUST FOR VENGEANCE!

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Both slated for TOTS #1, Larsen's "The Werewolf's Curse!" was published in Crime Patrol #11 (Apr/May 1949) and "The Hangman's Revenge" in Crime Patrol #12 (Jun/Jul 1949). Craig was scheduled to illustrate this second story, but author Howard Larsen ended up doing the job himself

Also of interest was the second issue of *Haunt of Fear* where the first story by Johnny Craig called "Vampire" features a small box of text in the lower left corner of page one that says "A Journey Into the Supernatural." I'm sure there are others to find if one takes the time to look.

One of the questions that constantly nagged at me was what had happened to the cover art by Johnny Craig for *TOTS*? Most assuredly Gaines would have utilized this art for one of his horror comics. I have spent many hours thinking about this cover art over the past eight years. Eventually I decided to put together a mock-up of what the logo design for *TOTS* might have looked like. I did this using various parts of lettering that I borrowed from other EC covers and stories. I was having fun playing with the different lettering ideas and trying to figure out which published EC

cover had originally been drawn for *TOTS* #1.

The story topics at hand to choose from were vampires, werewolves, zombies, and lastly, a dying man whose soul enters a gorilla's body. I'm not positive just how to classify that last story other than to just call it a... supernatural story. I figured Gaines would have probably tried to use the *TOTS* cover art early on rather than later so I concentrated mainly on the time period of late 1949 to 1950 when the conversion from pre-Trend to New Trend took place. I even went back and studied many of Johnny Craig's earliest covers from 1947 to 1948 published on the crime and western pre-Trends, hoping that perhaps this would help identify some small peculiarity which would in turn help me pick out the *TOTS* cover published later.

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... AND SO THIS CREEP WHO CALLS HIMSELF THE KEEPER OF THE CRYPT OF TERROR STICKS A CONTRACT UNDER MY NOSE! WHAT COULD I DO? I SIGNED IT!
GULP! YOU TOO? LOOK! I SIGNED ONE WITH SOME FIEND CALLED THE KEEPER OF THE VAULT OF HORROR!

"Horror Beneath The Streets," (HOF #17) contains the historic meeting between Gaines (and Feldstein) and the three ghoulunatics... in a story that satirizes signed contracts

After much scrutinizing of these early covers, I believe the elusive *TOTS* cover to be the published cover to *Haunt of Fear* #15 (actually #1), dated May/June 1950. There are several reasons why I believe this to be true. Before I arrived at this conclusion, I sent Shelly Moldoff a handful of Xeroxes of various early EC covers to look at. In a follow-up phone conversation a few days later, Shelly told me that even if he saw the *TOTS* cover he probably couldn't identify it. It had been too many years ago and he just didn't remember it at all.

Part of my reasoning in thinking *HOF* #1 is the *TOTS* #1 cover art is that when you compare all three of Gaines' first issue horror covers, this one stands out as being quite different. Where as the covers to *Crypt of Terror* #1 and *Vault of Horror* #1 both relate to horror stories featured inside those issues, the cover to *Haunt of Fear* #1 relates to nothing specific inside. Also, out of these three horror comics, the horror hosts who introduce the stories (also known as the "ghoulunatics") are only featured in *Crypt of Terror* and *Vault of Horror*. The *Crypt of Terror* feature was introduced by the "Crypt Keeper," and *Vault of Horror* was hosted by the "Vault Keeper." Many comics fans and collectors make the mistake of assuming that the cover to *HOF* #1 depicts "The Old Witch" horror host who eventually became synonymous with the *Haunt of Fear* title. This is not the case, however, since there is no reference to "The Old Witch" made either on the cover or inside the comic. There is no host introducing any of the stories in that first issue.

The first appearance of "the Old Witch" horror host came along with the second issue of *Haunt of Fear*, depicted for the first time by artist Jack Kamen for a story titled "The Mummy Returns." Kamen's first depiction of the Old Witch included a bulging left eye that Graham Ingels would later further define and exaggerate to the extreme. Craig's depiction of a cloaked figure opening the door looks more like an old man than an Old Witch. Plus, it wouldn't be logical for a witch to be opening the door, when in fact you've already got a witch in the background stirring a cauldron.

So what we have here is a cloaked old man, or old hag, opening the door into a room or a dungeon filled with every imaginable element of horror or supernatural characters. We see the witch stirring the cauldron, skulls and skeletons, rats and bats, a coffin with lid opening, a ghoul chomping on a bone, and lastly... ghostly images!

This cover, in my opinion, makes a strong statement about the supernatural. It is a cover unlike any other EC cover in that it features such a variety of different horror elements. It stands out as something out of the ordinary when you look at the overall scope of EC horror covers, most of which would have been conceptualized by Gaines and Feldstein and Craig, during the initial beginnings of the horror line.

When the Russ Cochran EC art auctions began in the early 1980s, I used to drive to West

I see here in my record book that around this same time I did some Tigra stories for Better Publishing. This was in 1946.

ROGER: I would imagine that is where you first met Graham Ingels...

SHELLY: Yes.

ROGER: Was Graham one of their head editors?

SHELLY: No. He was with someone else. I can't remember the other fellow's name. I really can't remember. I did a Black Terror story for them.

ROGER: Wasn't it around early 1947 that you started working for M.C. Gaines again? He was about to launch his new title Moon Girl...

SHELLY: What happened was, Sheldon Mayer went over to National to work because M.C. Gaines sold out his interests in the books he had published under the All-American banner. He started his own company called Educational Comics. He called me up and asked me to work for him. I started first doing a series called "Madelon," which was about a French spy.

ROGER: Those ran in the first three issues of International Comics...

SHELLY: Right. Then later on he came up with Moon Girl and the Prince. I think Gardner Fox was the writer on it. So I started doing that feature for him.

ROGER: Any idea who actually created the Moon Girl character?

SHELLY: I would say the characters were probably created by M.C. Gaines, and then he gave it to Gardner Fox to write the stories.

ROGER: Who designed the costumes for these characters?

SHELLY: I did that.

ROGER: Do you remember an editor at EC by the name of Sol Cohen?

SHELLY: Yes, he went over to Avon Publications later on. He was the editor. I don't know if he was immediately after Sheldon Mayer, but he was there for quite a while. I got along well with Sol Cohen. In fact, I still remember him. He was a tall thin man. He was an OK guy to work with.

ROGER: What happened after M.C. Gaines was killed in a boating accident in August of 1947?

SHELLY: Bill Gaines, Max' son, came in right after that.

Shelly Speaks!

ROGER: And did he hold a special meeting with you guys or discuss what was happening?

SHELLY: Not really. I came in one day and he was there. He took charge of the company. If I remember correctly he told me that the books were selling terrible. He said the family had given him $150,000 to play with. If he lost that money then that was going to be the end of the comic book publishing business for them... and I said... "Well, suppose I give you an idea that I think is going to sell like wildfire. Would you give me a percentage?" I said I only want a percentage if it makes money.

He [Bill] said, "No problem." So I brought in the idea for a horror comic book and he gave me a contract. This was in early 1948 when I first showed him my ideas for a horror comic. He signed a contract with me.

This house ad from Moon Girl #2 (Win 1947-48) was probably on the stands at the time M.C. Gaines died

ROGER: Bill Gaines gave you a contract to do a horror book?

SHELLY: Yes, I have a signed contract with him. I still have it to this day. I was even going to get Graham Ingels involved in the project because I thought his style was perfect for it. Now I'm looking through my record book here and I see a page on *Tales of the Supernatural.*

ROGER: That's a horror title I've never heard of before.

SHELLY: That's right... because it never got published. This was the title for the horror comic that I produced and turned over to Bill Gaines... but he didn't use it. And I see here from my notebook that I did a story for it called "Vampire of the Bayous." Johnny Craig did one called "Zombie Terror."

ROGER: Well, I certainly recognize those titles, especially "Zombie Terror." You said a minute ago that you had wanted Graham Ingels to be involved in the project. What happened there?

SHELLY: I just mentioned his name to Gaines. And then, I guess, one way or another, they got in touch with each other. You know, Graham had a very rough style. He used a pencil very, very loosely, then he would ink it all in with a brush. That was the way he drew and I thought he had a great style for horror. A nice "dry-brush" style. ▸▸

Tales of the **Supernatural!**

Plains, Missouri every three months just to personally examine all EC art before it was sold. Since I was bidding on a lot of this art I felt it was necessary to check out the condition before bidding on it. During the long course of these auctions, I had the chance to examine every EC cover original along with most of the stories as well.

Later on, after the Cochran auctions were finished selling all of the horror art, I was able to acquire the original art to the cover of *Haunt of Fear* #1 from another collector. When I received the art I noticed immediately something that I had never seen on any of the other EC horror covers. In the lower righthand border area I found a stamp in red ink that read: "Educational Comics, Inc. 225 Lafayette St., N.Y.C. Telephone: Canal 91994".

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I had never seen this stamp used on any covers or stories during my visits to Russ Cochran. I know that Gaines had all kinds of rubber stamps back in those days, some of which he continued using right up until the time of his death. I always kept an eye out for any of Gaines' stamps on the artwork but never saw any until I saw this cover art. It probably doesn't mean anything but who knows, Gaines might have stamped this cover because it was sitting around in the office files or drawers for over two years, and might have considered it an added element of copyright protection. I only mention it here because it is something out of the ordinary.

Around 1995, I had the chance to inspect the originals to the *TOTS* stories "The Werewolf's Curse" and "The Hanged Man's Revenge" during a visit with Russ. I found no EC stamp on either story, nor any special handwritten notations or markings about *Tales of the Supernatural* in the borders or on the backs. Both stories were very clean with no paste-ups either. As far as I know the originals for Moldoff's "Vampire of the Bayous" and Craig's "Zombie Terror" have not yet turned up from the EC vault of Cochran's auctions.

A few years ago I did call Johnny Craig and questioned him about the *TOTS* project. Johnny remembered Shelly Moldoff all right but didn't remember working on a special horror book with him.

I also touched base with Al Feldstein by phone. Al had absolutely no memory of the *TOTS* project but felt that Shelly Moldoff deserved some long overdue credit for his efforts. I wasn't too surprised that neither Craig nor Feldstein remembered the *TOTS* project. After all, it has been 50 years ago this past March when Gaines and Moldoff first discussed it. Johnny Craig did most of his work at the EC offices so why would he remember a particular cover or story being done for *TOTS*, when that material just wound up being used in other EC titles. Feldstein, like Craig, was very busy in those days and since he hadn't worked on the *TOTS* project he had no specific reason to remember anything about it.

I think it's important to remember that these guys were "cranking out" the work in those days, trying to support their families and worrying about their car payments and home mortgages. It was basically just a job... and little details (like an unpublished issue of a comic book) were not something that was remembered for any length of time. Had Moldoff taken Gaines to court there might have been something more to remember about the whole affair. For one thing, there would have also been a court transcription of all testimony... and that certainly would have shed more light on what actually transpired.

I think because Gaines and Moldoff settled the matter privately, it quickly faded in the minds of those who were briefly involved with the *TOTS* project. Of course Shelly Moldoff remembers because it was his idea and he was in for a percentage of the profits. I'm sure had I picked up the phone and called Bill Gaines about it, he would have remembered

too… and certainly shared his own (an perhaps very different) views on the subject. Out of all the interviews done with Gaines, Feldstein, and Craig over the years, nothing was ever mentioned about Moldoff or *TOTS* #1. Interviews are only as good as the questions asked though… and had comic book researchers asked these questions 20 or 30 years ago, we might have gotten some additional info on the *TOTS* project.

My thanks and appreciation go to Shelly Moldoff for keeping good records of the facts surrounding *Tales of the Supernatural*. If not for him (and his record book) we wouldn't now know the intended contents of *Tales of the Supernatural*. Matter of fact, we wouldn't know much at all about *Tales of the Supernatural*, period. After careful analysis of Shelly Moldoff's story, I am still pondering the reasons behind why Bill Gaines didn't go ahead with the *TOTS* project. One possible reason may have been ACG's entry into the horror field with *Adventures Into The Unknown* #1 (Fall 1948). Historians often credit the title as the first "continuing" horror comic series in America.

A comic book dated Fall, 1948, was actually on the comic racks sometime in June or July. For a comic to have been distributed in June or July, it would have had to have been in works as early as March or April (or even earlier since a first issue of a comic title often requires extra time and planning to produce. The interesting footnote here is that Shelly Moldoff was also involved with that first issue of ACG's new horror title. In my interview with him, Shelly reveals that he completed a 7-page horror story for ACG on February 10th, 1948. This is the story titled "The Castle of Otranto," which was indeed published in *Adventures Into The Unknown* #1.

Since Shelly was doing the "Moon Girl" feature on a regular basis for Gaines during this same time period, it is very probable that Gaines became privy to information about ACG's new venture before it ever hit the comic racks. This information could have been confided to Gaines by Moldoff or other sources that Gaines had in the industry. Either way, Moldoff turned in his 7-page horror story to ACG on February 10th and by March (exact day unknown) had sold Gaines on the idea of doing a new horror comic called *Tales of the Supernatural*.

Upon close inspection of *Adventures Into The Unknown* #1, several points of interest relating to *TOTS* #1 can be identified. For instance, there is an "introductory" page on the inside cover of *Adventures Into The Unknown* #1 featuring a short write-up that mentions "superstitions" and "stories of the supernatural." In the lower half of this same page, a contents listing is presented. In this listing appears Moldoff's "The Castle of Otranto," along with a brief two-line description that says "behind its grim battlements lurked… THE SUPERNATURAL!"

Consciously or sub-consciously Shelly may have picked up the title idea of "SUPERNATURAL" from this page before it ever went to press. Either way, Moldoff deserves credit for coming up with, in my opinion, a great horror title for a comic book.

Perhaps Gaines put the hold on *TOTS* #1 simply because he decided not to gamble the money on a somewhat unproven idea, and instead elected to watch and see how well ACG did with their new horror comic. It is important to note, though, that almost right away, Bill published "Vampire of the Bayous" and "Zombie Terror" in consecutive issues of *Moon Girl* in the summer and fall of 1948.

This means that close on the heels of the receipt of Moldoff's artwork package (delivered on April 30, 1948), the decision was made very quickly to publish two stories initially drawn for *TOTS* #1. At that point, Shelly Moldoff must have realized that Gaines was not going to publish *Tales of the Supernatural*. The two remaining stories drawn by Howard Larsen were then published in consecutive issues of *Crime Patrol* in the spring and summer of 1949. Oddly enough, it was at this time that

ROGER: Graham had done a lot of work for the pulps early on and that's probably what helped him to develop that style.

SHELLY: Yes. He had a flare for doing illustration work. He and Bill became real good buddies.

ROGER: So Bill liked your idea of doing a horror book?

SHELLY: Oh yeah. And Bill's lawyer was a fellow by the name of Dave Alterbaum. He was also National Comics' lawyer. So I went down to his office and he drew up a contract, and you know, he congratulated me. I thought everything was fine.

ROGER: Looking in your notebook, what other stories were created for *Tales of the Supernatural* #1?

SHELLY: Johnny Craig also did one called "Hanged Man's Revenge."

[INTERVIEWER'S NOTE: As I later researched this story title, I found that Howard Larsen actually drew the artwork for this story. Apparently Craig had had problems meeting the deadline.]

And a fellow by the name of Howard Larsen did a story titled "Curse of the Werewolf."

ROGER: These story titles all sound kind of familiar to me and I know for sure that "Zombie Terror" by Craig appeared in *Moon Girl* #5. But I suspect that Gaines must have eventually published all these stories in his various horror titles. (*INTERVIEWER'S NOTE: Later we found out he did.*)

SHELLY: Well, he may have used some of these in his comics. Now, Johnny Craig did the cover. Okay, now looking in my record book it says "started March 1948. Completed April 20, 1948."

ROGER: How did you happen to come up with the name *Tales of the Supernatural*?

SHELLY: Actually, I think at the time I first discussed this with Gaines, I had also mentioned the title *This Magazine is Haunted…* and there may have even been a couple of others thrown in, too, because initially I was thinking of doing a couple of horror books for him. *Tales of the Supernatural* just happened to be the one that we settled on at the time.

ROGER: Who did the writing for *Tales of the Supernatural* #1?

SHELLY: Dick Kraus wrote the stories. Gardner Fox wrote a couple of filler pages. I had an introductory page called "Superstitions," and a fellow by the name of Jimmy Wroten did the lettering. He

Shelly Speaks!

was lettering for Gaines at the time. And then I also had *Tales of the Supernatural* #2 listed and ready to go... but it never happened.

ROGER: What went wrong with the deal?

SHELLY: I produced a horror book and turned it over to Bill Gaines, which he took and put in a drawer. He said, "you know we're going to publish it, I'll be in touch, and you'll get a percentage," etc., etc. And nothing ever happened. Then I called about it him later and he said "No, we haven't done anything yet Shelly." Then several months later or whenever it was, I passed by the newsstand and I saw the *Crypt of Terror* and *Vault of Horror* comics and so I went running down there to Bill's office. I felt he had stolen my idea.

A vintage photo of Fawcett staffers, Richard (Dick) Kraus (author, left, who now can be credited as the writer of EC's first horror stories), Wendell Crowley (general editor over all comic titles 1944-50, middle), and Will Lieberson (Fawcett executive editor 1943-53, right)

ROGER: So what did Bill say when you showed up there?

SHELLY: Bill Gaines said, "I knew you'd be here. I said "Why not, we had a deal." He said, "Well, I decided I can't pay percentages. Besides, these books are different from yours. I didn't use any of your material."

I said, "I know, but we talked about the horror and supernatural. I gave you the idea and I worked it out. You gave me a contract." And he says, "Well, I'm sorry, but I decided I can't pay percentages. You can't sue, there's nothing you can do about it." So I went down to see Dave Alterbaum, the lawyer.

ROGER: What did he have to say?

SHELLY: I told him, "I'm really shocked because I've known you for years. We signed this contract in good faith."

He said, "Shelly, pass it off to experience. There's nothing you can do about it. If you try, they'll blackball you in the industry."

So there was just nothing I could do about ▸▸

Moon Girl was changed over to *A Moon... A Girl... Romance*, and Moldoff left EC, never to return.

Since Shelly was a very capable artist, one must wonder why he didn't stick around to draw romance or crime comics for EC. Perhaps he had become displeased with Gaines for having basically "dismantled" *Tales of the Supernatural*, by publishing the stories one by one in different books. There are implications that perhaps Gaines got cold feet on the *TOTS* idea and had second thoughts about his agreement with Moldoff to pay him a percentage of the profits.

For that matter, it is even possible that Bill's mother, Jesse, could have nixed the deal simply because she was, in effect, the more mature business partner with a controlling interest in company funds. Even Bill's lawyer might have advised him against such an agreement that could easily set a precedent for paying an artist a percentage... something that had never been done before at EC and was a rarity indusry wide. The "dismantling" of *TOTS* may have been Gaines' only way of defusing a situation that he thought might (and probably would) have long term legal ramifications.

My conclusion would be that between the time that Gaines and Shelly made this agreement (and Shelly and the others completed the work on *TOTS* #1), Gaines was advised by someone not to go through with the agreement.

In my interview with Moldoff, he told me that when he brought in the completed book of art for *TOTS* #1, Gaines put it in a drawer and told him, "You know we're going to publish it, I'll be in touch, etc., etc." In my opinion, this does not sound like a very enthusiastic response from a publisher who has just received the finished artwork for what could be an exciting new comic title for his company to publish.

Furthermore, if Gaines was serious about publishing a new comic title, why didn't he have Shelly immediately go right to work on preparing a second issue? Whatever the reason(s), Gaines clearly wasn't quite ready to launch a horror comic in 1948.

Regardless, I do believe that *TOTS* had some impact on Bill Gaines and EC's eventual transition into the field of horror comics... but to what extent we may never know for sure. Chances are Gaines would have gotten there on his own anyway since he had always been a big fan of horror movies, radio shows, and pulps all through the 1930s and 1940s.

It's also important to remember that Gaines stayed abreast of the market and he would certainly have known by 1949 that ACG's *Adventures Into The Unknown* comic was doing well. He also would have noticed Timely Publications converting some of their long running titles to the horror genre that same year.

Perhaps Gaines had doubts about using a title with the word "Supernatural" in it. After all, of all the horror comics produced during the 1950s and 1960s, not one publisher ever utilized a title with "Supernatural" in it.

On the other hand, had Shelly or Bill thought about it a little longer, they might have added the word "Strange" to "Tales" and dropped the word "Supernatural." By doing that they would have had one of the best-selling horror titles ever created in the history of the genre. *Strange Tales* anyone? I think we've just heard one!

Roger Hill is a nationally recognized comic art historian and researcher in the study of pulp magazine and comic artists who worked during the 1930s-60s. He is currently finishing up research on the life and career of artist Mac Raboy, and is involved as Art Director for a book currently in the works on the career of Wally Wood.

it. The contract was worthless. I still have it. I still have the contract. But that was it.

ROGER: Have you ever spoken to Bill Gaines since all this happened?

SHELLY: No.

ROGER: And you haven't seen him at all?

SHELLY: No. We've had no contact at all. A couple of years ago I wrote to them asking if I could get the original art pages of "Moon Girl and the Prince." I wrote to Bill Gaines about it. I received a letter back from his lawyer. It was a very curt letter saying that all the pages were the property of Bill Gaines or whatever the company was.

ROGER: Well it is true that Bill kept a close hold on the original art that was produced for any of his publications. Of course the truth is that most of the artists didn't care since Gaines paid the highest page rates in the business, too. One final question Shelly. When you made your original pitch to Gaines on *Tales of the Supernatural*, and later turned in the completed art, did the concept include any horror hosts that introduced the stories?

SHELLY: No.

ROGER: So that was something you incorporated later on when you went to Fawcett Publications with the horror idea?

SHELLY: Right. I think the way it came about with Will Lieberson and Fawcett was that he liked the title of *This Magazine is Haunted*, and they were interested in doing the horror books. So he said let's come up with a host. And of course by that time Gaines was using hosts in his horror comics. A couple of other publications were doing that kind of thing also.

ROGER: What kind of an arrangement did you work out with Fawcett Publications when you went to them with *This Magazine is Haunted*?

SHELLY: I strictly sold them the title. The editor there, Will Lieberson, knew what had happened between Gaines and me. So I suggested to him that maybe Fawcett would be interested in the idea. So he said let's submit it to Fawcett and see what happens. I think I got a hundred dollars for the title, or something like that. Will called me back and told me it was OK, they would take the title, and told me to go ahead and get started.

ROGER: Okay, so *This Magazine is Haunted* was Fawcett's first title as they ventured into the horror genre. The first issue, cover dated October, 1951, was probably on the comic racks by July or August. What titles came next?

SHELLY: I sold them *Worlds Beyond* in May of 1951... sold it for a hundred dollars. Then in January 1952 I did the first *Worlds of Fear* cover.

ROGER: Now that brings up an interesting question about the *Worlds Beyond* title. The first issue, under that title, debuted in November of 1951. Then with the second issue the title was changed to *Worlds of Fear*. Do you remember what caused Fawcett to change the name of the title?

SHELLY: You know... I don't really remember why that happened.

ROGER: Perhaps it was because the title *Worlds Beyond* was a little too close to Ace Publishing's horror title *Beyond* which had been running since November 1950.

SHELLY: It's very possible, I'm just not sure what happened there.

ROGER: Did the people at Fawcett know of the great success that Bill Gaines was having with his horror books?

SHELLY: Oh yes... the whole industry knew about it. Other companies were already putting out horror books of their own. I had done some horror jobs early on for Dick Hughes over at ACG.

Two years after "Horror Beneath the Streets" appeared, EC readers were treated to "Kamen's Kalamity," which appeared in Tales from the Crypt #31, Aug/Sep 1952. Written by Al Feldstein and illustrated by Jack Kamen, it tells the story of Kamen being hired by Gaines and Feldstein to draw romance comics for EC, but then having great difficulty adjusting when they convert to the horror books. Once again, mention is made of being forced to publish horror comics by "those characters we met in the sewer."

WE'RE RUINED, AL! OUR LOVE BOOKS ARE SELLING 2%! WE'LL BE BROKE IN A MONTH!
WHAT ABOUT THOSE THREE BOOKS WE WERE FORCED TO PUT OUT BY THOSE CHARACTERS WE MET IN THE SEWER?* Y'KNOW! THE CRYPT OF SOMETHIN', ETC.!
WAIT, I'LL CHECK! GOOD... LORD! SOMEBODY'S BUYIN' THAT HORROR STUFF! LOOK!
HEY! THEY MADE MONEY! ALMOST TEN DOLLARS EACH! WE'RE RICH!
*SEE HAUNT OF FEAR 17..(NO BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE)..'HORROR BENEATH THE STREETS'!
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Shelly Speaks!

ROGER: In fact, you did a horror story that appeared in the very first issue of *Adventures Into The Unknown*, dated Fall 1948. This is actually considered the first continuing series horror title ever done.

SHELLY: Yes, I see here in my book that I did a 7 page horror story for Dick Hughes and delivered it to him on Feb. 10th, 1948.

ROGER: The story is "The Castle of Otranto." I really like your work on that one.

SHELLY: Thank you.

ROGER: After you sold *This Magazine Is Haunted* to Fawcett and the go ahead was given, was there any discussion between editors, writers, or artists there to try to pattern the new horror books after EC?

SHELLY: No, they didn't pattern it but we did discuss the contents quite a bit. Fawcett analyzed the writing you know. If you read the text of a Gaines book you saw that EC's text was much more gruesome than most of the other books on the stands. Lieberson and the people above him at Fawcett did not want to go into that gory type of script. In other words, yes, they were horror stories but they wouldn't go into that horrible detailed type of description.

ROGER: So Fawcett pretty much tried to stay away from the gruesome description commentary.

SHELLY: Well... at Fawcett, comic books were always sort of a stepchild for them. They had a lot of other magazines... they were a very big outfit and it seemed like the comics were always teetering on the edge of failure. It was kind of like they really didn't want to be involved with them. Of course, Captain Marvel had become a very big seller and was making a lot of money.

It's important to remember that the comic book was not the most popular publication in those days. A lot of parents were against them. Teachers were against them, too.

ROGER: Did you bring in any of the other artists to help with the horror titles?

SHELLY: No... George Evans and Bernard Baily had already been working at Fawcett doing romance, western, and other kinds of stories for some time.

ROGER: Were there ever any kind of meetings held for you guys to discuss stories or ideas for the horror comics?

SHELLY: The editors had conferences with the writers, but I was never involved with any of them. I know that Will Lieberson, as Editor-In-Chief, had weekly conferences with the higher ups at Fawcett. They had strict policies there about what they were willing and not willing to print.

ROGER: Do you recall if Fawcett ever asked you to make changes on the horror stuff you were doing for them?

SHELLY: Occasionally.

ROGER: Were you satisfied with the horror scripts that you were given to draw?

SHELLY: Some were good, some weren't. If you didn't get a good one, you could try to make it better with your drawings.

ROGER: Did Fawcett provide artist studio space there for artists to work?

SHELLY: I don't recall any of the artists working up at Fawcett. I think it was just the editorial staff up there.

ROGER: It seems that during the run of *This Magazine is Haunted* and *Worlds of Fear*, you seem to have been given most of the cover assignments. Obviously they must have thought you were doing a good job.

SHELLY: I guess that's right... I didn't have a contract with them.

ROGER: Did they give you a free hand on these covers? I notice that the covers didn't necessarily match the stories inside...

SHELLY: Yes... they just wanted a cover that would sell. You know, something that would get people to buy the book.

ROGER: Do you recall anyone at Fawcett asking you to tone down any of the horror covers you did for them... perhaps an editor suggesting that you'd gone a little bit too far with an idea? For example, the cover you did for *This Magazine is Haunted* #10, where the fisherman is pulling a severed head out of the water...

SHELLY: No, they never said anything. I never had any covers turned down either.

ROGER: You've already told me that the covers to *This Magazine is Haunted* #11 and 13 were favorites of yours from the run. Were there any others?

SHELLY: I think of them all as being pretty much in the same vein, you know. Sometimes when you're looking at the original it might look like the technique turned out a little bit better than the others. But I learned early on that what you think is a favorite, or what you think is your best work, isn't going to mean that it sells any better.

Also, many times the editor won't even notice it when you did something you think is lousy. They'll say "hey, that turned out great." You know what I mean? (*Laughter*)

I never really thought about it because I found that there was a tremendous inconsistency between your own feeling about something, and what the editor would think about it. It was crazy.

Many times I would come home and tell my wife, "Well, they loved it, but I thought it stunk." With comics, it was very hard to tell what was going to be the big seller, or what would take off next. The comic business was always such an up and down thing. Sales were unpredictable. I don't think even the publishers figured it out.

I remember when they almost closed down Batman because sales were very bad. But they held on because they had the clout, you know.

Early on, during the war years, they wouldn't give up titles because they had paper quotas... and they didn't want to lose those quotas.

ROGER: So even though *This Magazine is Haunted* enjoyed a good run at Fawcett, they finally shut it down in late 1953 when Fawcett lost the Captain Marvel/Superman court battle with DC.

SHELLY: Well, when they lost their *Captain Marvel* title, Will Lieberson told me that they were going to go out of business. They were going to close down the comic book line. As I said before, the comics always were just a stepchild to Fawcett. But then they sold the horror titles to Charlton.

ROGER: Did Charlton have to pay you a royalty fee or anything for taking over those titles?

SHELLY: No. I never had anything to do with Charlton. I never even went up there. At that time I was doing Batman again for Kane, plus I had other accounts.

ROGER: Just before the curtain came down on the Fawcett horror titles in 1953, were you and other artists already aware of the growing mood of public dissatisfaction with the crime and horror comics?

SHELLY: Oh yeah. There was a lot of bad press going on about it. I even used to get a lot of flack from my neighbors. They used to say, "How can you do that, how can you be associated with that sort of thing?" and "You have such a talent, why are you wasting your time with that kind of stuff?"

ROGER: Did you ever read Dr. Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*?

SHELLY: Yes, I remember that. And I also remember when Bill Gaines went up before the Kefauver Senate hearings and testified.

ROGER: Did they ever call you to testify?

SHELLY: No. But you know, Gaines was considered to be the "kingpin" of the horror comics. They said his books were the worst because the stories and text were so gruesome.

ROGER: Al Feldstein was Bill's editor on the horror comics and actually wrote a good deal of the stories, too. Did you ever meet him?

SHELLY: Yes, I knew Feldstein. I believe he originally started out at EC doing love stories. He was buddies with Gaines and then later on he got involved with *MAD*.

ROGER: I've got some names of people who worked at Fawcett, and I thought I'd throw out two of them.

SHELLY: Go for it...

ROGER: Do you remember one of the editors on the Fawcett horror books by the name of Roy Ald?

SHELLY: Yes. Roy Ald... I did a lot of work for him. Gosh, I haven't heard his name mentioned since I left Fawcett.

ROGER: I've also found the name of Al Jetter listed on the masthead of many of the Fawcett horror comics. He was listed as Art Editor.

SHELLY: Al Jetter. Yes, he was there too. But I did a lot of work for Roy Ald. I believe Roy was handling the horror books that I worked on there.

ROGER: You didn't work on any of the Captain Marvel books while you were there did you?

SHELLY: I think I once inked in a Captain Marvel Jr. story for them. Mac Raboy was sick so I did one story. Actually I think I penciled the story too.

ROGER: Did you ever meet Mac Raboy?

SHELLY: No I never met Raboy, but I thought he had a very good style. He did nice, clean work. He left out a lot of backgrounds. Sometimes his stuff looked a little barren, you know. I thought his covers were very good. He eventually took over the *Flash Gordon* strip, and he did a nice job on that too.

ROGER: After Fawcett you continued to freelance for other companies like ACG. Did you ever work for Marvel/Timely/Atlas?

SHELLY: I see here in my notebook that I did a story for Timely, for *Astonishing*. It was a story called "Till Death Do Us Part." I also did a police action story for Timely... a story called "The Plotters." I did quite a bit of work for Stan Lee. This was in 1953.

I was back doing Batman for Bob Kane around that same time.

ROGER: How long did you stay with Kane this time?

SHELLY: I stayed with him until 1967. At some point in there I had also started to work for Jack Schiff who was an editor at DC. After I finished up with Bob Kane I was still doing stories for National.

ROGER: What titles did you do?

SHELLY: I was doing stuff for *House of Mystery*, Legion of Superheroes... etc. One of the last things I did for Bob Kane was for the Ledger Syndicate... the *Batman* newspaper strip for the first 3 months that it ran.

ROGER: Were you doing both the daily and the Sunday page feature?

SHELLY: Yes. Sunday, and daily, and the books. It was during this period that Bob was renewing his contract with DC and word got out that I was helping him. The pressure of the work was so great and they knew he couldn't be doing it all by himself, so they asked him who his assistant was. So word got out about me at that point.

ROGER: So Kane had kept this all kind of quiet up to this point?

SHELLY: He denied it up to that point, and I never said anything to anybody about it. I was paid by him and that was my job and I never told anybody.

[*Laughter*] Jack Schiff and Henry Boltinoff occasionally said to me that my stuff looked a lot like the Batman stuff that was being done. I'd just say well I've known Bob a long time, we're good friends you know. Usually I'd just change the conversation and they never really pursued it.

So anyway, Bob Kane was in the process of signing a new contract with them and he was telling me that I was always going to be his righthand man. Well, Bob and I never had a contract between us, but after working all those years I felt pretty secure.

But finally he came to a new agreement with them and he called me up and told me to come over to his place and talk. So I drove over... he was only about 20 minutes away. Bob explained that he got a new contract but was sorry to say I'm out of it.

I said what do you mean I'm out of it?

Bob says, "well, that's the deal I've made. They're going to handle all of the artwork now and you have nothing to do with it anymore." He also said, "I feel terrible about it."

And I said, "Yeah, but not as bad as I do, Bob." And that was the end of it. That was it. I didn't see him again for at least ten years after that.

To make matters worse, all my other work at National stopped at the same time.

ROGER: Did they ever say why?

SHELLY: No. I went in with a finished story and when I asked for another script Murray Boltinoff said they didn't have one for me yet. He said they would call me. And that was the end of it.

ROGER: You kept records on all this?

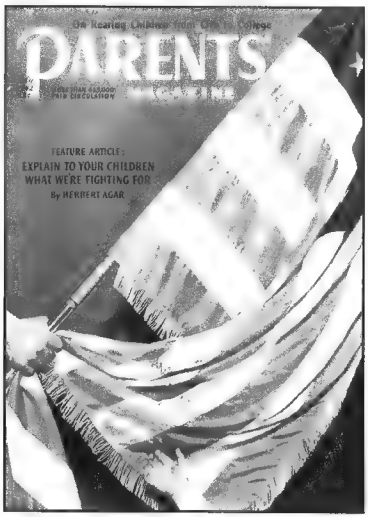
SHELLY: Yup. I wrote it all down in my book. Everything I did is noted here. I did 15 years with Kane. I did a lot of love stories for Dick Hughes. I did a lot of horror, and a lot of westerns, too. I did a tremendous amount of things, but very few things were signed.

ROGER: Thanks for talking with me Shelly... you've supplied some great information.

SHELLY: Happy to do it.

Looking Back...

Contributed by Shawn Hamilton



For years, many collectors and historians believed that the assault on comic books by religious and social groups began in the late 1940s. Actually, the comic book industry was under attack right from the start... and by the early 1940s it was the brunt of numerous negative articles and ads such as the one from *Parents'* (Jul '42) shown.

Ironically, this advertisement promotes two comic titles published by Parents' Magazine Press, *True Comics* and *Calling All Girls*. But as part of the sales pitch, they disparage all other comics by asking the question "Or do they stuff their [your children's] minds with the super-sensational trash that has flooded the newsstands and exercises such unwholesome influence on so many boys and girls?"

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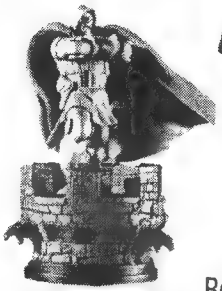

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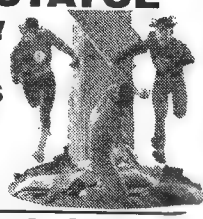

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THE MICHAEL NAIMAN REPORT

"Qualified" VF/NM 9.0?
Collectors Getting Confused...

First on the agenda this issue is a look at the changing demographics of our hobby. The age group marketplace seems to have shifted in the last year.

The current census of the United States is approximately 274,000,000 people. Of that group, males make up the 25-35-year-old age group count (approximately 18.7 million). These are the hardcore earning years for many with a ton of discretionary income available for spending on their "toys." Conversely, the 45-50 year old age group, who have funded the hobby for the last 20 years numbers approximately 9.9 million.

Many 45+ year-old collectors are choosing to diversify (some even bail out) rather than stay in and deal with the ever increasing radical behavior that one finds on the dealers floor. Of course that's not the only reason you find people leaving the hobby... college costs, new home purchases, debt, divorce and death! While many of their collections are becoming complete (or unafforable to complete) their interests are shifting to original comic art, toys, movie posters, and advertising memorabilia. The go-go stock market is also providing a quick profit and interest shift for many when compared with the less volatile current day comic book scene.

Filling the collecting void is the 25-35-year-old group of collectors. Their mania is the Marvel product. 1970's Spidey, Avengers, and X-Men lead the way. Of course, most of their collecting requirements focus on Near Mint product. There's a ton of it out there... why not be picky? Every day you see a new "named" collection of Marvel stuff. Go figure.

An oftentimes overlooked sector of the hobby is the bound volume field. While these are certainly tough to locate, they can usually be had at a fraction of their loose Guide value. I have even seen collectors self-binding their books. A great way to keep a long run in viewable condition. Because of their scarcity, the publisher's bound volumes will always bring more than the fan-bound issues. Coverless Golden Age and some key Silver Age books can also be had at a bargain price. Who can afford even reasonably priced AF #15, Spidey #1, or an FF #1. Sure you can buy the Marvel Masterworks... a fine way to go. But, holding that original comic (and yes, smelling its time-travelling aroma) is a big portion of the "comic book experience." Mid-and-early '60's Adventure, Action, and Superman issues in FN grade are appearing to make a nice surge of late. Simple story lines and clean art are the order of the day here.

But whether you collect the old or the new... the bound or the unbound, there's another potentially consumer-unfriendly wrinkle in the ongoing grading controversy... and brings me to my second area of discussion.

I don't know when it happened. Did it occur in my sleep? Did the millennium bring on a magical transformation? My suspicions lead me to deduce that its genesis was at last May's Overstreet conference in Maryland. Many things happened there that were unexplainable. And I thought the X-Files were weird!

Sometime between then and now the grading definitions have been mysteriously misinterpreted. A newly-established grading service has taken it upon themselves to redefine the clearly stated, globally accepted definitions presented in the Overstreet/Carter Grading Guide and the Overstreet Price Guide.

(Continued on page 73)

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EBay: We sold an entire set of Warren Creepy magazine #1-145 mostly in NM, and all in custom slipcases for $1,200. A FN copy of Overstreet Price Guide #2 went for $140. Otherwise, we sold 50 more books that did not move in the stores over a six month period. They wound up selling for around 1/2 Guide. If it doesn't sell in the store, that usually means that it will not get a high price over the net. I like to keep inventory moving, so I don't mind taking my profit on what turns over rapidly, and cutting my losses on what does not. I think that Internet auctions are good for really nice, rare items, or items that you just want to get rid of. If you put an item up at no minimum bid you can be sure that it will be gone in a week! Only for the very best items will I put in a reserve. On the Creepy set for instance, I put in a reserve of $1,000. I just didn't want to sell it for any less!

APE Report: The Alternative Press Expo took place Saturday February 5th at Fort Mason in San Francisco. (The location was moved from San Jose, where it was held in previous years.) Most people seem to prefer the new location. The turnout was good, and sales were steady despite scattered showers. Most of the creators seemed upbeat about the response. The shoppers were open-minded, and willing to try new books. We plan on attending as vendors again next year, and recommend the show for those who enjoy small press comics and magazines.

CGC Report: I mailed 24 books to the Comics Guarantee on 11/12/99. I have been getting them back in small groups, and have

◆◆ CBM MarketWatch ◆◆

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Guide) by Michael Naiman

Adventure
#303 FN+ ... $27 ... 1.13X
#305 VF ... $25 ... 48%
#311 NM ... $102 ... 1.85X
#315 FN+ ... $10 ... 60%
#316 VF ... $31 ... 89%
#320 VF ... $32 ... 91%
#428 NM ... $25 ... 78%

Angel & the Ape
#3 NM ... $15 ... 68%
#4 NM ... $15 ... 68%

Amazing Spider-Man
#1 VF ... $7,100 ... 1.01X
#6 NM- ... $985 ... 82%
#12 FN ... $80 ... 65%
#12 NM ... $480 ... 1.01X
#17 FN+ ... $140 ... 97%
#51 FN ... $27 ... 60%
#55 NM ... $81 ... 1.19X
#56 NM ... $76 ... 1.12X
#57 NM ... $69 ... 1.01X
#58 NM ... $91 ... 1.34X
#59 NM- ... $50 ... 74%
#60 NM ... $91 ... 1.34X

Archie
#33 VG ... $24 ... 60%
#38 VG ... $36 ... 90%
#61 VF ... $48 ... 1.37X

Avengers
#1 FN+ ... $850 ... 1.7X
#1 VG ... $279 ... 85%
#3 FN+ ... $108 ... 1.02X
#4 NM ... $1,335 ... 89%
#13 NM ... $130 ... 1.13X
#23 NM- ... $51 ... 1.28X
#27 NM ... $40 ... Guide

Batman
#33 VG ... $190 ... 86%
#40 NM ... $1,045 ... Guide
#66 GD ... $113.5 ... 1.6X
#200 VF ... $60 ... 86%

Battle
#5 GD ... $85 ... 10X

Captain America
#10 FN ... $1,600 ... 1.54X
#12 GD ... $300 ... 1.06X
#101 NM- ... $36 ... 72%
#103 NM ... $20 ... 66%
#114 NM ... $22 ... 1.22X

Classics
#7 (1st) GD ... $58 ... 70%
#8 (1st) GD ... $84 ... 60%
#11 (1st) GD ... $57 ... 74%

Comic Pages
#6 FN+ ... $227 ... 1.53X

Cowpuncher
#6 GD ... $27 ... Guide

Creepy
#1 NM- ... $71 ... 79%

Daredevil
#6 VF ... $78 ... 92%
#8 VF ... $57 ... 67%
#9 NM ... $56 ... 43%

Detective
#49 FN- ... $500 ... 92%
#172 (MH) FN $1,720 ... 4X
#405 NM ... $41 ... 1.70X
#409 NM ... $24 ... Guide

Eerie
#2 NM ... $41 ... 68%
#5 NM ... $15 ... 68%
#35 NM ... $10 ... 50%

Exciting
#14 GD+ ... $50 ... Guide

Fantastic Four
#16 VG ... $40 ... 69%
#44 VF ... $50 ... 1.28X
#72 NM ... $61 ... 1.45X
#86 NM ... $20 ... 71%
#97 NM ... $20 ... 87%
#106 NM ... $15 ... 94%
#108 NM ... $18.5 ... 1.16X
#110 NM ... $18 ... 1.13X
#111 NM ... $14.5 ... 91%

Ghosts
#21 NM ... $7 ... 78%

Giant Size Defenders
#1 NM ... $22 ... Guide

Giant Size Kid Colt
#3 NM ... $75 ... 2X%

Hulk
#2 VG+ ... $247 ... 85%
#5 FN ... $240 ... 94%
#108 NM ... $49 ... 94%
#109 NM ... $25 ... 71%

Human Torch
#7 GD+ ... $275 ... 1 46X

Iron Man
#1 NM ... $380 ... 1.17X
#2 NM ... $152 ... 1.38X
#3 NM- ... $49 ... 82%
#6 NM ... $33 ... 83%

Joe Palooka
#9 FN ... $12.5 ... 45%

Judo Joe
#3 VG ... $10 ... Guide

Kamandi
#1 NM- ... $20 ... 66%

Kathy
#15 FN ... $9 ... 1.3X

Leave It To Binky
#14 (MH) VF/NM $250 ... 5.5X

Lois Lane
#71 VF+ ... $52 ... 64%
#81 VF ... $10 ... Guide
#85 VF ... $10 ... Guide

Man-Bat
#2 NM ... $6 ... Guide

Marvel Spotlight
#13 NM ... $12 ... 2X
#15 NM ... $11 ... 1.83X

Millie the Model
#150 NM ... $15 ... 75%
#153 NM ... $10 ... 50%
#158 NM ... $10 ... 55%

Mystery in Space
#75 GD ... $24 ... Guide
#3 FN ... $106 ... 53%
#6 FN ... $91 ... 67%

Mod Wheels
#1 NM ... $9.5 ... 42%

Negro Romance
#3 GD ... $77 ... Guide

New Gods
#1 NM ... $31 ... 62%

Phantom Stranger
#1 FN ... $13 ... 58%

Plastic Man
#57 GD ... $15 ... 60%

Scribbly
#15 VG ... $55 ... 92%

Secret Hearts
#87 VG ... $17.5 ... 4 38X

Silver Surfer
#4 VF ... $325 ... 1.3X
#7 NM ... $87 ... 1.02X

Strange Adventures
#208 NM ... $45 ... 94%
#209 FN ... $10 ... 69%
#210 FN ... $10 ... 69%
#212 NM- ... $31 ... 86%
#213 VF ... $12.5 ... 54%
#214 VF ... $10 ... 43%

Strange Tales
#103 VF ... $150 ... 96%
#109 VF ... $93 ... 93%
#116 VF ... $81 ... 1.25X
#147 NM ... $75 ... 2.5X
#148 NM ... $100 ... 1.82X
#149 NM ... $53 ... 1.77X%

Sun Girl
#2 GD ... $97 ... Guide

Superman
#61 GD+ ... $105 ... 95%
#224 NM ... $18.5 ... 51%
#225 NM ... $17 ... 47%
#228 NM ... $17 5 ... 49%
#229 NM ... $17.5 ... 49%
#230 NM ... $17.5 ... 49%
#236 NM ... $13 ... 65%

Swamp Thing
#1 NM ... $56 ... 80%

Tales of Horror
#12 GD ... $15 ... 88%

Tales of Suspense
#58 VF ... $177 ... 1.03X
#59 NM ... $400 ... 1.51X
#94 NM ... $90 ... 2.25

Tales to Astonish
#64 VF ... $29 ... 89%
#67 VF ... $31 ... 95%

Torchy
#1 VG ... $232 ... Guide

Tops Flipper
#1 NM ... $7 ... 70%

Uncle Scrooge
#99 NM ... $13 ... 36%
#104 NM ... $26 ... 72%
#108 NM ... $22 ... 61%
#179 NM ... $1,025 ... 13.66X

Wonder Woman
#49 GD ... $72 ... 1.8X
#104 GD ... $51 ... 5X

X-Men
#2 VF ... $750 ... 71%
#5 VF ... $300 ... 1.12X
#25 VF+ ... $85 ... 1.31X
#65 NM ... $71 ... 1.18
#71 NM ... $38 ... 1.41X
#78 NM ... $38 ... 1.41
#85 NM ... $20 ... 74%
#87 NM ... $33 ... 1.22X
#114 NM ... $31 ... 1.11
#117 NM ... $20 ... 71%
#119 NM ... $22 ... 79%

Young Romance
#198 VF ... $50 ... 1.04X

now received 22 of them. I'm still waiting for two more and it's been three months! Apparently the CGC is having trouble getting all the various sizes of cases made up. When I get all the books back, I will do a report on how their grading compares with mine.

WonderCon: It will be held April 7-9 in Oakland, at the Oakland Convention center. We will be there!

Pulp Sales: The Pulp Market is a growing one for us. The only problem is that there is no price guide. I have to work hard to come up with pricing for the books. Here are the pulps that sold in the last month.

Amazing Stories (all of these books sold for $20) 10/39 FN, 6/39 VF, 8/39 FN, 9/39 FN; $10 sales: 3/38 VG, 4/38 VG, 4/39 VG, 5/39 VG, 11/39 VG, 12/39 VG, 1/40 VG, 2/40 VG, 11/43 VG, 4/44 VG, 5/44 VG, 2/46 FN; $5 sales: 6/42 GD, 7/42 GD, 5/46 VG, 7/46 VG, 8/46 VG, 10/46 VG 11/46 VG, 2/49 VG.

Astounding 10/37 FR $5, 8/38 FR $5,1/39 GD $7, 4/39 GD $5, 5/39 FR $2.50, 6/39 VG $12, 8/39 VG (Heinlein) $20, 9/39 GD $6, 10/39 GD $6, 11/39 FR $3, 3/40 VG $20 Heinlein, 4/40 G $20 Hubbard "Final Blackout", 2/41 FA (Heinlein) $5, 3/41 FR (Heinlein) $5, 4/41 GD (Asimov) $10, 5/41 GD (Heinlein) $10, 6/41 FR $3, 7/41 GD (Heinlein's "Methuselah's Children") $10, 8/41 FR (Heinlein) $5, 9/41 FR

NBC (Heinlein) $5,11/41 GD $5, 12/41 FR $2.50, 10/43 FR $2.

Famous Fantastic Mysteries 12/45 VG $10, 8/46 VG $10, 10/46 GD $5, 12/46 FR $2, 4/47 GD $5, 6/47 GD $5, 2/49 GD $5, 10/49 GD $5, 1/51 GD; Fantastic Adventures 6/40 FN $20, 8/40 VG $10, 10/44 VG $10, 4/45 VG (Bloch, Derleth) $20, 11/46 VG $10; Fantastic Adventures Qtrly Spr 51 GD (Hubbard, massive size!) $20; Marvel Science Stories 4-5/39 VG (#4, scarce early Marvel) $30; Marvel Tales 12/39 (#6, scarce early Marvel) FN 12/5 (#6).

Planet Stories Sum/46 GD $10 Bradbury; Science Fiction 3/39 (#1) VG $25; Startling Stories (most have text pieces by Mort Weisinger) 11/39 VG $20, 3/40 VG $15, 5/40 GD $8, Fall/45 GD $5, Wint/45 GD $5, Sum/46 GD $5.

Super Science Stories 11/50 VG $5; Thrilling Wonder Stories 6/37 VG 12, 8/37 VG 12, 10/37 GD $6, 8/39 VG $10, 10/39 VG $10, 10/39 GD $5, 1/40 VG $10, 5/40 GD $5, 9/40 VG $10, Fall/46 GD $5, Sum/45 VG $8, Fall/45 GD $5, Wint/46 GD $5.

Two Complete Detective Books 1/48 GD $5 (#48); Two Complete Science-Adventure Stories Wint/50 FR $30; Unknown 4/39 (#2) GD $30, 8/39 FR $15, 10/39 GD $15, 4/40 GD $15, 6/40 GD $15, 12/40 FR (NBC) $15, 4/41 VG $25, 10/43 GD $15.

Weird Tales 6/43 VG (Brundage Nude Cover, Howard) $100, 5/39 GD $20, 7/39 VG (Finlay Cvr, Howard) $40, 8/39 VG $40, 9/39 FA $10, 10/39 VG $30, 12/39 GD $15, 7/45 FN $50, 11/49 VG (Matt Fox Cvr) $25; Wonder Stories 2/34 GD $10.

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EBay Sales: Bronze Age books continued to be strong in January, with many books going for significantly above Guide. Collectors are willing to pay a premium for high grade pre-1975 Bronze, especially black-cover Marvels These books rarely come up for sale. What is seen more often... a NM Sgt. Fury #103 (black cover) or a NM Fantastic Four #88?

The CGC grading service: It will, in my opinion, change the industry for the better. It has already made a definite impact on Internet sales, with my three books, a VG 5.0 Fantastic Four #1, a FN 6.0 Incredible Hulk #2, and a FN 6.5 Justice League of America #1 being the first CGC graded books to hit eBay. The FF #1 sold for a premium above Guide, but, more tellingly, had 31 bids and 400 page views. Only time will tell on how CGC grading continues to help, but it definitely makes it easier to sell a book, as the subjective part of the sale is gone.

Hot books include any high grade Bronze Age Marvel, the Elseworlds 80 Page Giants (could sell all of them if I had them), 30¢ and 35¢ variants, and any Golden Age.

Cold books include mid-grade Silver, which sell, but significantly under Guide, and more modern books.

The following are sales of note in January (all Internet/eBay).

Golden Age: Four Color #911 (Gray Ghost) FN+ $26, All Star #38 (JSA Death Issue) GD/VG $255, All Star #55 (sci-fi story) FN/FN+ $420, Joe Palooka #108 FN $26, Batman #45 (Xmas cover) FN+/VF- $281.

Silver Age: Fantastic Four #1 (CGC VG/FN 5.0 and slabbed) $1,925; Incredible Hulk #2 (CGC FN 6.0 and slabbed) $440; Journey Into Mystery #95 VF/VF+ $95; JLA #1 (CGC FN+ 6.5 and slabbed $625); Rawhide Kid #35 VG/FN $21; Silver Surfer #6 F/VF $21.

Bronze Age: Avengers #134 NM $9, #149 (30¢ var) VG $15; Batman #238 (100 pg giant) FN $26; Daredevil #131 NM $22; Son of Satan #3 (30¢ var) NM $31, Super Stories #1 NM $15; Tales of the Zombie Annual #1 Fine $13; Western Team Up #1 NM $13.

Modern Age: Elseworlds 80 Page Giant nn (#1) NM $225, nn (#1) VF $188, nn (#1) Fn $153, Batman Adventures Mad Love Special (Origin Harlequin) nn NM $20.

MATT NELSON • COMIC CONSERVATION

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Now that the '90s are behind us, it's time to turn our attention to the future of comics in this new millennium. For both buyers and sellers, there's no better time than now to reassess the state of the market and your position in it. Where will we be in one year? Ten years?

Some feel that there's some doubt for the survival of the new comic market. The question is, how does that affect us at the other end? I'd like to believe that it won't very much, but realistically, I'm afraid it will. New comics serve as a gateway into the older issues for both young and old; just look at the state of pulps and big little books over the last 20 years. These predecessors of comics are truly considered antiques, relics of a bygone era, with no connection to our present. The most expensive pulps and big little books can each be had for only hundreds of dollars. Only recently have pulps experienced a surge in popularity, due mostly to tremendous demand from comic book collectors.

So what's the solution? Go check out your local comic store... if it's still there. Great comics are still being made, but now without the polybags and gold foil covers. Set up a folder and get a handful of your favorite titles. Even if it's just a few comics a month, it'll still make a difference. And not just comics! My local store also carries a ton of other great stuff.

On the topic of Golden Age and Silver Age—Original Art, reprints, history books, fan mags, etc. all come out all year long! If they don't carry them, grab your trusty monthly Diamond catalog and have them order it. Who knows if there'll be another boom around the corner for comics. Think for the best, but prepare for the worst. Do your part as a "concerned" comic citizen of this great collecting community!

But as far as "now" is concerned, well, everything's doing great! EBay is all anyone talks about now, and I think there's no denying that it's the determining force behind probably 50+% of the sales in comics right now. You could say there's three kind of sellers right now... traditional dealers (using catalogs and advertising), eBay sellers, and a mix of both. The ones mixing both methods fare best, because: 1) there still is, and always will be, a good percentage of buyers who shy away from eBay, and 2) the majority of books selling on eBay go for under Guide, while advertised books, despite a usually longer

shelf time, bring Guide more often.

Mainstream Golden Age sales continues to narrow here; key issues, rare issues, great covers and high grade material sell quickest. Silver Age is picking up, with low grade early material moving for close to Guide. Key issues and high grade will always do well.

Sales: Detective #38 (restored) appFN $2,000; Marvel Mystery #2 (coverless, missing two outer wraps) $511; More Fun #44 PR (nbc) $50; Showcase #4 GD $1,100; #5 VG $150; #6 GD $243; #7 VG $246; #8 PR/FR $300; #9 FR+ $350; #13 VG- $500.

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Purchases are the name-of-the game this month. We were fortunate to have been contacted by a long time and well-known San Diego collector who has been in the process of liquidating their collection over the past few years. An abundance of Silver Age comics and Westerns were the order of the day this time around. Also included was an assortment of miscellaneous stuff only a true comic collector could appreciate.

We also purchased a large Silver and Bronze collection from a local character that once owned a store in San Diego. His stuff was in storage for years until he offered them up to us. That's the upside of our purchase power. The downside is trying to make fair offers based upon the Price Guide. The Internet and changes in consumer purchasing choices render our old purchasing schedules risky. We are finding it increasingly difficult to justify purchasing comics at our normal 25-50% percentage of present Guide prices for '60s through '70s comics. '80s-'90s comics are entering our store at a consistent 10¢ apiece. We find ourselves making in-depth explanations to our sellers about the reality of true sales versus the prices we'd all love to consistently achieve through Overstreet (or, more incredibly, Wizard!)

Golden Age: New Adventure #18 FR $175.

Silver Age: Amazing Spider-Man #40 VG/FN $65; Captain America #100 FN $50; Daredevil

THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

Timely, Chesler, Fiction House, & Raboy!

Just when we thought that we were a major player in the hierarchy of collectibles, along comes an assault on comic books from many different directions... Western enthusiasts, TV and movie memorabilia collectors, and militaria collectors are all sucking up comics as fast as they can find them. And here's the whammy... they're much less picky about condition!

It's also important to note that these various factions are individually larger than we are as a whole. Dwarfed as we might be though, there is one saving grace. Seems theses "outsiders" are (ironically) looking for books that our hobby usually relegates to the back burner. Four Colors, Westerns, TV and movie tie-ins, Disney material, and cartoon characters... all find welcome homes in other collecting domains.

Golden Age: Is it any surprise that Timelys are back in demand. Nothing shocking about that, but the prices that are being paid for high grade and/or unrestored copies are moving steadily upward at an amazing pace. Cheslers are once again in higher demand, while early Fiction House in condition is now seen as under-valued. Oh... and have you been following what nice Mac Raboy Captain Marvel Juniors are doing on eBay? Impressive to say the least!

Golden Age Sales: All Select #7 VF $930; Amazing Mystery Funnies V1#4 FN/FN+ $360; Black Terror #2 VF/NM $1,000; Detective #99 FN $240; Dynamic #8 VF $510; Fight Comics #11 VF/VF- $180; Future Comics #2 FN/VF $485; Human Torch #29 VF $825; Jungle #28 NM- $290; National Comics #13 VF/VF- $275; Prize Comics #4 FN $220; Star Comics #8 VF $380; Sub-Mariner #4 VF $1,875; Torch #23 VF/VF+ $1,180.

Atom Age: It was only a matter of time before the large faction of Atom Age investors/collectors turned all their attention (and monetary resources) toward Atom Age comics... material that is extremely underrated and undervalued in the guides. The fallout effect is twofold, first, some collectors who already have the material are declining to sell it, holding on because they are sure it will continue to escalate in value. And two, buyers (who have already seen availability drying up) are stoking demand with outrageous offers at many multiples of Guide which further drives up prices to even more dizzying heights! Many companies (especially some Atlas, most pre-Code crime, and nearly all Fox Romance) continue to see an ever-expanding base!

Atom Age Sales: Battle #22 VF $60; Battle Action #3 FN $42, #4 FN $40; Cloak & Dagger #1 GD $32; Combat #8 VF $70, #11 FN $38; Crime & Punish. #30 NM/NM- $82; Don Winslow #12 VF $32; J. Wayne #7 FN $150; Junior #13 VF $450; Sun Girl #1 VF $980; Superman #72 Giveaway GD $110; Teen Age Rom. #45 FN/VF $165; Terrors of the Jungle #20 VF $270; Torchy #1 FN+ $420.

Silver Age: As mentioned above, TV/movie tie-ins are finding a welcome home outside of the comic hobby. Bonanza leads the way, but the prices being realized for Green Hornet books qualifies as "astounding." And as might be expected after the passing of Charles Schulz, anything to do with Peanuts is quite hot right now and is only going up.

Silver Age Sales: FC #1115 FN $62, #1221 FN $70, #1270 FN $85; Heart Throbs #98 NM- $55; Jetsons #32 FN $55; Mission Imp. #2 VF $63; Peanuts #1 (GK) VF $155; Six Gun Heroes #57 FN $18; Sugar & Spike #1 GD $240.

Bronze Age: Now that many have found their high grade keys, they've been heading back to the con floor in search of lower grade reading copies, and steadily pushing up prices. Detective, Action, Master of Kung Fu, JLA, Avengers, and ASM lead the way.

Bronze Age Sales: Adventure #425 VF $12, #431 NM $40; ASM #101 GD $35; Avengers #100 GD $11; B&B #102 VF/NM $18; GL #86 VF $15; Jonah Hex #1 NM $32; JIM #1 NM $24; Master of Kung Fu #17 NM $28; Our Army at War #300 VF/NM $15; Werewolf By Night #1 FN $18.

#5 FN $50; Fantastic Four #1 PR/FR $300; Iron Man/Submariner #1 FN $20; Journey Into Mystery #83 appVG/FN (light restoration) $700; X-Men #12 VG/FN $65.

Bronze Age: Daisy and Donald #47 (Whitman 3-Pack) FN/VF $25; Incredible Hulk #181 NM- $450; Marvel Super Special/KISS Mag #1 NM $50.

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We experienced a slowdown in sales at the end of last year through mid-January, but, we are happy to say that from that point on through February sales are radically climbing. We have had an exponential increase in eBay sales with many customers requesting a concise and updated (latest acquisitions) website to order from. The 21st century is here and it's online!

We've had numerous calls and emails from our customers, collectors and dealers alike concerning "qualified" grades from the CGC. I've been tracking CGC graded books on the Internet and thus far they seem excellent. The holder is simply the best archival device found anywhere and the quality is apparent. What is also apparent is the confusion being wrought over qualified grades stemming from a Hulk #181 on eBay listed as "qualifying" grade VF+ with a notation "missing a page." I feel this is a fair copy at best and is misleading to the novice collector and investor. For those of you who heed my advice, use common sense in these kind of purchases... a mint grade on a horse with a notation that it is dead obviously means its a dead horse!

I feel CGC graded books will be a boon to Internet selling with its course of standardized grading, but they will have to educate people about the distinctions of standard grades and qualifying grades. The dealer reps they utilize should be very versed in the distinctions so if you have questions I suggest you contact them or the CGC with questions or concerns. An informed investor is a happy one.

Golden Age: Superhero books are overtaking esoteric comics for the first time in over a year! All-American #27 VG+ $550; Action #6 GD $906; Batman #28 VG $148; Capt. Marvel #4 FR $175; Leading #8 VG $125, Plastic Man #5 VG $70; Sensation #4 VG+ $415, #26 VG $201.

Atomic Age: Horror is king, romance is queen, and everything else the kingdom of "Can't keep it in!" FC # 456 FN+ $216; Mystic #3 FR $36; Popular Teenagers #14 VG+ $80, #15 VG+ $57; Jimmy Olsen #2 FR $100; World of Mystery #1 VG- $41.

Silver Age: High grade is the rule here for a quick and powerful sale with low and mid-grades bringing Guide and a little below. Amazing Spider-Man #1 VG $1506; FF #1 F $2800, #4 VF $990; Groovy #1 VF+ $32; Sgt. Fury #13 VF $100; Strange Advs. #100 VG+ $26; Strange Tales #149 NM $32; Tales To Astonish #93 NM- $40.

Bronze Age: This is still a hot and very viable market for high grade toughies and for collection fillers. Chamber of Darkness #7 NM $36; Lancelot Link #1 NM $26; Iron Fist #14 NM- $56; Hulk #181 NM- $490; Winnie the Pooh #2 NM $47; X-Men #94 MT- $890.

Memorabilia: Marvel is the biggie here with Golden Age superhero items coming in second and Disney making a big rise. Black Bolt blacklight poster VF $190; Capt. Marvel Club original envelope and letter VF $87; Hot Stuff Harvey '70s mini statue w/trident still attached NM/M $270; Mickey Mouse Sunoco Oil Defense Bond Ink Blotter VF+ $46; Mighty Marvel Messenger Newsletter w/orig. envelope and sell sheets VF $162.

Artwork: A great market is roiling and boiling in unpublished sketches by the greats and published covers and splashes—even newer material. Jack Kirby FF pencil sketch 10x14" NM $1,200; Kirby animation pencil drawing of Jace as Beast NM- $140; Matt Baker Wonder Boy illo pen/ink/pencil VF- $876; Dick Ayers western Ghost Rider pen/ink sketch NM $50

GREG WHITE • COMICS AND COLLECTIBLES

17 WEST MONUMENT AVENUE
KISSIMMEE, FL 34741
407•870•0400

Hello from Central Florida. Sales are below average at the store this winter. No doubt that the Internet has played a big part in this. I know of many customers that used to purchase old comics from my store and other Orlando area stores that now sit at home and satisfy their collecting needs through various Internet auction houses. These same collectors don't bother to attend what few local comic book conventions are left. The lack of over the counter activity has made many of us shift gears and direct our energy in other directions. It is clear to see that if this trend continues there will be few if any independent comic book stores left who concentrate on the sales of pre 1970 comics. No one needs the headaches and overhead of a retail location if they are going to sell their product over the Internet. The next couple of years will be interesting. It may come to the point that all that is left for shopping is Wal-Mart and the Internet. I hope not.

Silver Age 1955-69: We were able to sell many low to mid grade early Marvels this month. Demand continues for first appearances and origin issues. DC sells well and is much harder to replace than Marvel. I recently put out a few hundred pre-1968 DC books in my sales boxes and they lasted but a couple months. Gold Key, Archie, Charlton, and Dell move sporadically.

Silver Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #6 FN $165; Batman #171 GD $35; Fantastic Four #28 FN $75; Green Lantern #40 VG $80; Sea Devils #1 VG $80; Showcase #35 GD $35.

Golden Age 1935-55: We were very fortunate to purchase a large group of late '40s-early '60s comics from an attic find in Orlando. It included strong runs of DC, Fawcett, Atlas, Dell, and EC. The man had been sitting on these books for years and recently discovered some minor rodent damage on a few dozen books and decided to sell the group before he suffered any further loss. We have large shows coming up in Europe and San Diego and these books will ensure a terrific selection.

Golden Age Sales: Archie #2 GD $250; Batman #4 VG/FN $900; Capt Marvel # 46 VF $1,150; Marvel Mystery #92 FR $300; Superman # 24 VG $300.

Not much happening in the artwork or toy field this past month. We have steady inquiries regarding early Barbies, GI Joe dolls, Capt Action, and Aurora kits. Comic character toys pre-1965 are hard for us to come by Once again our sales in this area have been impacted by the wonderful Internet. Our

Disneyana sales have dropped off in recent months also due to Internet activity. Hopefully the across the counter customers will return at some point.

JEF HINDS COMICS

PO BOX 44803
MADISON, WI 53744
800•791•3037

An interesting story comes along with a recent find. Not only did the owner remember buying the Flash #1 off the stand but he also remembered that he was jealous of another k'd at the time who had every comic including the first Superman and Batman. Where is HE now?

All Flash #3 VF $795, #4 VG+ $505, #5 GD+ $161.50, #6 FN+ $400., #7 FN+ $435, #8 FN- $255.77,#9 (w/ 1/2" tr) VF+ $295, #10 VG/FN $218, #12 FN $255, #15 FN- $163, #16 FN+ $325; All Star #6 FN $625, #9 VF- $965, #10 VG+ (w/ loose int) $539, #11 FN $672, #12 FN $545; World's Finest #2 VG $495,#3 (w/ loose int) VG $395, #4 FN $585, #6 FN $510, # 8 VF- $810, #9 FN 429.

Batman #23 (CGC VG/FN) $405; Brave & Bold #6 (CGC FN/VF) $177.50; Detective #113 (CGC VF-) $333; Fantastic Four #17 (CGC VF-) $162.50, #11 (CGC FN/VF) #210; Flash #117 (CGC VF+ $202.50); Our Fighting Forces #2 (CGC FN/VF $170); Showcase #22 (CGC FN $699), #7 (CGC VG+ $325); Tales To Astonish #31 (CGC VF-) $102; #35 Antman Key (CGC FN) $256; Three Mouseketeers #1 (CGC FN/VF) $163.50.

Opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

A recent offering on eBay (item # 250705621) is one of the many examples currently surfacing. A Hulk #181 with a page missing graded a "Qualified" VF+?!

Huh?

Since when does a VF+ book have a page missing? I would hope that the bidder would understand that this book is not only common, but available every day from just about any retail dealer in Anytown, USA. This book is one of those retail staples along with Iron Man #1 and Iron Man/Sub-Mariner #1.

Another eBay "Qualified" book at VF/NM 9.0 that didn't hit reserve (item #255753620) has a large water stain on the back. According to the seller/owner:

"The stain goes across 60% of the top about a 1/2" down at one point not as much across the rest to varying degrees of stain, mid to light range in color. Even with this, it is still one beautiful book. Hard to find in this condition. The front cover is fantastic. It affects the very top of the book edge a little, but does not go in."

We might as well throw the grading standards out the door if everything can now be "Qualified." Let's see, I have a book with half the cover missing and a bullet hole through it, but I'll "Qualify" that and say that overall it has nice pages! That's a VF/NM book right? It's "Qualified."

Doesn't anything count anymore?

Apparently not. Just "Qualify" it and call it what you want. One well-known Southern dealer recounted this statement to me, "Calling a book a 'qualifier' always irks the hell out of me because that is just terminology for squeezing a grade."

This is exactly what a few of the lone voices in the hobby warned would happen when this "carpet-bagging" service came along. It's all about the money.

And it's not good for the hobby either. One of the grading service's goals was to bring new people into the hobby via their network of coin and trading card contacts. New people in the hobby is a good thing. Misleading grading is a bad thing! When the unsuspecting "Newbie" collector goes to sell his slabbed missing-a-page VF book to Mr. Dealer, he will be gravely disappointed if he cannot recover his original purchase price... for his defective "Qualified" book.

Another potential collector lost forever.

Collector confidence will be sorely undermined.

Of course, when you have a special-interest, dealer created-and-controlled grading system... what would you expect? Any grading service that is financially dependent upon the "kindness" of a few "charter member" dealers for their financial support and well-being... would you expect anything less? If you don't give the select group of charter member/dealers what they want, how long will they continue to send you product?

The whole point of my concern has to do with the future marketplace implications of erroneous grading. The trickle down effect will include 1) loss of collector confidence in the hobby; 2) lowering of valuations of "graded" books... no matter who grades them; and 3) negative publicity caused by disgruntled new "investors" who think that they were bilked by retailers.

Professional grading can work only when there is an agreement on the terms and definitions that are used. This should not be left in the hands of a couple of people in it for the profit.

As a possible solution to this dilemma, I propose a national symposium to be held at the San Diego Comic Con where all parties can get together and talk this out. The more input the better.

What do you think, CBMers? ■

If you've got a particular comic book marketplace insight you'd like to share, contact Michael Naiman via CBM.

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MARKETPLACE MAIL

Continued from page 9

I also recently bought Donald Duck Beach Party #1 (which I thought I had bought years ago). Boy was I surprised when I saw the Dell price in the corner... not 25¢ but 30¢! I checked out the photo of it in the Photo-Journal and the one in there has 25¢ for a cover price. Seems to me I've got another Dell Giant with this same price. And no... it's not a Canadian edition.

Got a coverless Christmas Comics at Mid Ohio Con last weekend—contents are: Captain Video, Bob Colt, two Lash LaRue's, and an issue of Master Comics. Can't pinpoint the number as Howard Keltner didn't index it in his book (never gave me credit for my "Sparkling Stars" info). Got any ideas on this one? Price Guide info is no help as my contents don't match.

Gary L. Watson, Ohio

Another piece of Gil Kane data

Just picked up my copy of CBM #74 and noticed my Jumbo Comic Book Illustration on page 6. Wow! I've hit the big time appearing in CBM!

The "Conversation with Gil Kane" is great, and enclosed is another piece of data to add to this great artist; I have this paperback (Xerox enclosed) Pinnacle Book #41-333-5. Original price: $1.50 A Tom Doherty Associates original. 1968, 1966. ISBN: 523-41333-5. B&W comic book format inside.

Mr. Kane's signature is at the bottom of the monster's right claw. Interior art by Mr. Williamson. Full color cover.

As you can see, this is an adaptation from the King Comic #2 cover as shown on page 56. Which came first?

Norral Johnson, Oregon

Supergirl & Zatanna

Have been trying to find a Silver Age DC comic with a Supergirl and Zatanna team-up but I don't remember the title or issue number. Can any CBM readers help?

Wes Carr, Florida

Even more drastic example

At the beginning of Pat S. Calhoun's column in CBM #74 he states, "It wasn't unusual for a comic book to change its title... in the early 1950s." He then goes on to point out Youthful Magazines' Captain Science which had four titles in its 17-issue run. I have a set that's an even more drastic example, in one of Atlas's war series. Starting with Devil-Dog Dugan #1 (July 1956), #2 (September 1956) and #3 (November 1956), the series then becomes Tales of the Marines #4 (February 1957) then finished with Marines at War #5 (April 1957, #6 (June 1957) and #7 (August 1957). That's three title changes for a 7-issue run. Wow!

Kevin Naughton, California

Hallowed pages

Finally, we got CBM #74 about ten days ago. What a great issue! And it was an enormous thrill to see my market report in those hallowed CBM pages. It had only been out a few hours when someone we'd never seen before came into the shop, said he'd seen the report. Cheers,

Rob Rudderham, London

Advertising variants

As per your suggestion in CBM #74, I checked the back covers of the 23 Dell Giant comics with 30¢ or 35¢ cover prices mentioned in the letter column of that issue, and find that only three of the 23 back covers carry advertising. The other 20 issues all have non-advertising material such as a one-page gag, an activity page or decorative poster-like artwork.

This reinforces your theory that as many as four combinations of cover price and back covers could exist for many Dell Giants. It seems likely, however, that books with a non-25¢ cover price carried advertising only infrequently.

Two of the advertisements were for Juicy Fruit Gum and the other was for a General Mills cereal called Trix. Both of these products are sold in Canada. This might suggest that the non-advertising back covers were substituted when the US edition was scheduled to carry an ad for some product not sold in Canada. Perhaps companies that manufactured, say, bicycles not sold outside the US did not like the idea of paying for an ad in a large-circulation publication where a significant portion of the readership would not be a potential purchaser of the advertised product.

I have never really subscribed to this oversimplified theory. The main flaw is that the back cover variations seem to occur primarily on Dell Giants and Dell Four Colors. Occasional back cover variations can also be found on other new or short-running titles put out by Dell or Gold Key, with an example being Star Trek #2 and 3 as noted in the Overstreet Price Guide. I don't recall ever seeing any back cover variations on long-running high-circulation Dell monthlies such as Tarzan or Walt Disney's Comic and Stories.

Another flaw with the theory is that Dell/Western could have simply told an advertis-

er that they would run the ad in the entire print run, but not charge their client for those copies going to regions where the advertised product was not being sold. This would seem to be simpler than preparing different back covers.

Conjecturing further, Dell perhaps had higher advertising rates in Giants and Four Colors than in the other comics they published. Dell Giants generally have painted covers on heavy glossy paper, making them more book-like than average comic magazines. Perhaps Dell took the position that Giants would be retained longer by purchasers, similar to issues of National Geographic, and hence should command higher advertising page rates. If the rates were higher, and advertisers were skeptical about the reasons, they would be less likely to pay for an ad in the entire print run. Higher asking prices for ad space, based on a perceived higher retention rate, might also have been true for Four Colors, which were often issued in connection with current movies or popular new TV shows.

To suggest an entirely different theory, comics with and without advertising on the back covers may have been influenced by requests from the distributors, for technical reasons. Dell Giants were mostly annuals and Four Colors were "one-shots." In this respect, Dell Giants and Four Colors differ from most other comics, which are published on a structured schedule such as monthly or quarterly and contain paid advertising. There may have been regions of distribution in which an ordinary book was treated differently for state sales tax or other purposes than were other types of printed material. In some jurisdictions, the presence or absence of advertising on the back cover of a Dell Giant or Four Color may have determined whether they would be categorized as books or as something else. Distributors or retailers may have expressed preferences to the publisher concerning back covers.

I would also like to state the following observation, which maybe isn't common knowledge. Some advertising variations can be found on the interior pages of Dell and Gold Key comics. Variations are not limited to just the back covers. For a few Gold Key comics, some copies will contain a page of paid external advertising, while in other copies of the same issue number the same page will be an in-house plug for Gold Key comics. A similar but strange example was a Dell Untouchables comic I had acquired an upgraded copy of. In one copy, the last interior page was completely filled by the conclusion of a full-length story. In the second copy, the lower half of the same final page contained paid advertising. Panels had been deleted so that the final story page could be printed in condensed form on the upper half of the page.

Stan Molson, Ontario, Canada

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Gunhawk Research

Was hoping a CBM reader who is also a western genre collector would be willing to help me with research on Red Larabee Gunhawk, especially his appearances in (origin) Wild Western #3, Gunhawk #12-18, and Two-Gun Western #5. If anyone has these issues your input would be greatly appreciated. I can be contacted via CBM Thank you.

John Butt, Newfoundland, Canada

But what do you guys think?

Enjoy the magazine greatly and consider this money well spent. Love the expanded market reports (one request... could you please share in a not so distant, editorial column, by Gary, the state of Comic Book Marketplace the magazine—not only goals and direction, but particularly circulation numbers, growth decline, naturally we see the thinning of publication size in CBG as many migrate to the Internet, etc?)

Anyway, my thought is that your publication, particularly its circulation, is perhaps the best indicator we have to the state of interest in the strength/weakness or downright reflection of not just the state of, but the reality of, in terms of interest and size, of serious back issue enthusiasts, collectors of the Gold, Silver, and Bronze Age comics.

I think it's time, particularly as issue #75 puts us 53 issues past the re-debut back with issue #22 in March 1995. I feel this magazine is now undoubtedly the best continuous monthly running publication ever (shades of Overstreet) but what do you guys think? Have circulation goals been met? and add that with other information which will come from the grading service just getting a real handle on quantity and quality of what's out there, we should really get a grip on how our hobby stacks up!

Add with that, the fact that comics have gained, I think their first foothold on the stock exchange, in Greg Manning Auctions, (symbol GMAI), (Sotheby's doesn't really promote comics—just annual auctions, and eBay—one item too many—GMAI is a comic guy—Bill Hughes) that also bears coverage.

Well anyway, here's my money gladly, and my support.

Ken Creekmore, North Carolina

I feel I have a clear vision of CBM and its the goals. I rate our success achieving those goals with the following report card:

(1) To level the playing field among all collectors through education and information.. .....B+

(2) To research, document, and chronicle the history of comic books and related collectibles .....B

(3) To make sure industry professionals and fandom founders get their well-deserved moment in the spotlight and their just and rightful credit for their contributions.....C-

(4) To promote the hobby of comic book collecting through information .....B-

(5) To promote ethics in the buying, selling, and trading of comic books and collectibles. .....A

(6) To create a hobbyist environment that promotes cooperation among collectors.....B

(7) To provide a forum for examination, exploration, discussion, and debate of germane topics.....A-

(8) To communicate the excitement, enthusiasm, and passion most collectors feel for the medium of comic books .....A

(9) To arm collectors with data that will help them to develop intelligent and informed collecting strategies.....B+

As for circulation, we have either remained steady and/or gradually improved... during a time when many related publications have declined or ceased publication. The good news is that the state of the vintage comic hobby has

never been stronger... and hobbyists have never been better informed or more savvy in the 40+ years of the hobby. Our survey data suggests that our circulation will remain in steady growth for years to come and that "the state of the hobby" is extremely healthy. Add to this (1) online sales have brought in thousands of new hobbyists (I conservatively estimate approx. 6,000-8,000 and exposed the hobby to tens of thousands more) and (2) hobbyists are beginning to look at all comics from the last seven decades as "20th Century Collectibles" further promoting interest in popular collectibles.

And regarding CBM being being "undoubtedly the best continuous monthly running publication ever" your words are very kind but I think it's important to remember the pioneering publications like the original Alter-Ego, RBCC, the early Overstreet Price Guide, and Alan Light's early Buyer's Guide (now CBG), and so many other early fanzines that should really get the credit for what CBM is today.

Treasure by the lake

The fall of 1998 my family and I took our annual vacation up to the northernmost point of Wisconsin; to the cozy little town of Bayfield. Bayfield is located right on Lake Superior and is a tourist haven in the summertime, full of bed and breakfast inns and quaint little stores. I stopped at a small antique shop to scout for comics, and after a short time came across a Dell Comics promotional sign. It was only $30 but I only had $10 left after a day of shopping with my wife and two-year-old twins, so I was out of luck. A year later I returned to Bayfield. I spent the better part of the day wondering; would it still be there? You bet it was! I even talked the owner of the store down $5!

Although I'm not a big Dell collector, I still thought it was a rare piece of memorabilia which would look great in my comic book room.

(As much as I love reading Dells however, Silver Age and pre-hero Marvels have always been my first priority.)

Jim Van Heuklon, Wisconsin

Meant for the Wolverton in #102?

Can The Complete Book of True Crime serve as the fill-in for the non-existent Captain Battle #4? By the way, while I have a Crime Does Not Pay Annual from 1953, I do not believe any other issues exist except perhaps from the late '40s through the early '50s. I doubt if any were printed before '47 or '48. I have never heard of or seen any in over 30 years of collecting!

A Champ #26 probably does exist. Gabe Essoe listed and sold a copy offered for sale in CBG #1219, 3/28/97, (Gabe told me he sold it to either John Lee of Continental Comics or Shaun Clancy).

While visiting Berkley Comics (now Comic Relief) during the mid '80s, I remember speaking to Rory Root who mentioned a fabulous huge esoteric/horror (mostly Atlas) pre-Code collection he acquired. I believe I saw They Rang the Bell tacked on the wall with hundreds of other comics from this collection, and asked what contents were inside it. Rory said, "The Phantom Lady." Maybe Ms. Nolan can confirm this (perhaps Rory could as well?)

Nice article on Subby, Gary (CBM #72). By the way us "old timers" feel that the penultimate Subby/Torch battle is the Human Torch #5 issue, not the Marvel Mystery #9! Let us not forget this for historical accuracy. (Refer to Overstreet's great article on Timely in Overstreet back in the late '70s or so. Also, Raymond Miller's classic article in Jerry Bails' The Comicollector double issue special #4 and 5 from 1962!)

Can any CBM readers out there help clarify the cover artists on Pocket and Speed Comics pocket-sized issues? Probably the following artists had a hand: Joe Simon, Al Avison, but did Jack Kirby lend a hand?

Also concerning Marvel Tales #95 (that fabulous space monster cover)... my guess is Wolverton's pencils of the creature and skyscrapers and maybe Matt Fox or Larry Lieber inks of the mob in the foreground. (Or maybe Carl Burgos penciled the foreground.) Does anyone know? I do not have a copy of Marvel Tales #95 or #102, but perhaps a fellow collector can check and see if maybe the cover of #95 was meant for the Wolverton story in #102?!

Stephen B. Keisman, Florida

Lois Lane's gravesite?

Trying to find a specific Lois Lane Story. I'm not sure if it appeared in "Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane" or "Superman." It is an imaginary tale. On the cover it has a downcast Superman walking away from Lois Lane's gravesite with their Super Daughter. Does this sound familiar to any CBM reader?

R. Thompson, via E-mail

Where is sticker set #2?

As a rule I don't contact magazines or books that I read, but this is a special case. I read CBM whenever I can find copies and especially appreciate the Gerber White Space Stickers for my Photo-Journals. However, I seem to have missed set #2 somehow. In fact, I have missed issues #72 through 74 and just realized it when reading #75 and seeing that the stickers were set #3, not set #2. This, in spite of the fact that my comics shop is supposed to pull them for me every month. That just goes to show you what happens when you miss going there for a few months.

That being the case, can you tell me when and where set #2 of the white space stickers appeared? They look absolutely great when installed correctly. I just love mine, and wish you would print them more often.

CBM is a nice package and fun to read with great graphics and a nice layout. Love the color and retrospectives on Golden and Silver Age artists and writers.

Issue #75 was one of those issues targeted at me, I think. I am a long time fan of Adam Strange, the Space Museum, early Flash, early GL, Infantino art, and Silver Age DC science fiction. My other personal favorites are Blackhawk/Military Comics/Modern Comics, Challengers of the Unknown, and Thunder Agents by Tower Comics. CBM is very informative while being fun and easy to read.

Hoping to hear from you regarding the white

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Please accept my apologies for the delay. I hope you will agree it was worth the wait!

Accreditation: Founding member of the American Association of Comic Book Collectors (AACC); Member of the AACC grading committee for Sotheby's comic auction from 1993-1996, 1998 and 2000; present/past advisor to Overstreet, the Comic Book Marketplace, CBG Price Guide, Comics Source; winner of CBG's customer service award.

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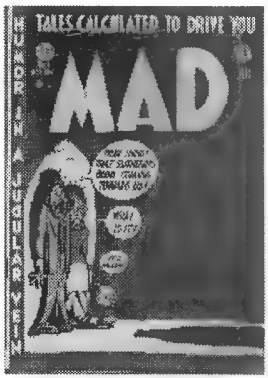
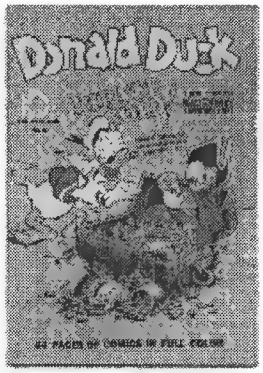
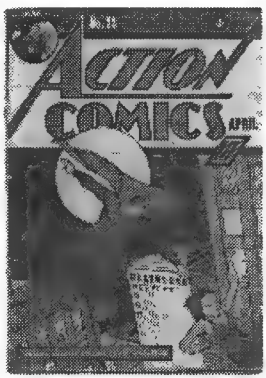


Mad Comics #1
CGC FN-; My grade VG+

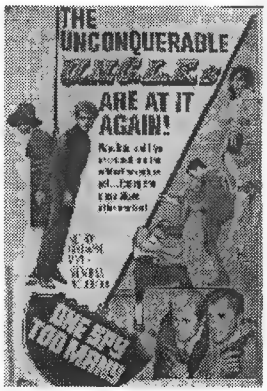
Startling Terror #11
Nice VG+, classic Cole cover!



Donald Duck Four Color #9
VGF, 1st Barks Donald Duck!



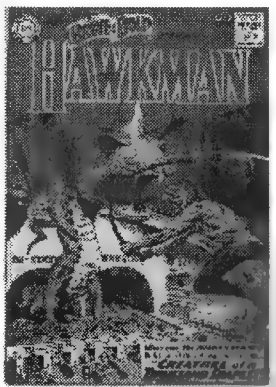
Action Comics #23
CGC VG-, My grade GD-



One Spy Too Many
Massive Three Sheet Poster

Fantasy Illustrated #1
Sharp FVF 1964 fanzine

Woodstock Peanuts Bank
Late 1950s metal bank



Brave and the Bold #34
Two nice VG+ copies

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space sticker set #2 soon. Keep up the good work. Thanks,

Frank Alison, California

Set #1 is in CBM Special Edition #2; Set #2 is in CBM #74; Set #3 is in CBM #75; Sets #4 & 5 are in CBM Special Edition #3. Oh, and sets #6 & 7 will be in CBM Special Edition #4 out in early summer. Whew… I hope I can keep track of them from now on myself…

Gil Kane, we'll miss you!

No doubt that you'll be getting a lot of mail about Gil Kane. I am SO very glad about CBM #74. It couldn't have been better timed. He was a master of the comic arts. There aren't many in his league or of his stature. I looked at #74, again, today, and realize what a true great he really was. He will be sorely missed. I'll keep this short because there aren't enough adequate words to describe his genius. Gil Kane, we'll miss you! Always! He was one of a kind.

Steve Fears, Oklahoma

Terrible shock

The passing of artist Gil Kane was a terrible shock, I had no idea that he was battling cancer. As I was perusing through my collection to find several of his magnificent covers with which to pay homage, I found two from 1975 which represent a strange and sad irony…

Gil Kane penciled the covers of both Giant-Size X-Men #1 and X-Men #94, the first appearance of the new X-Men and the first appearance in their own title comic respectively. It was these two fabulous covers which brought the "All-new, all-different X-Men" back from comic book limbo to a prominence that would eventually lead to the biggest-selling and most popular comic book of its time.

It still seems unlikely that X-Men could ever have achieved such status given the fact that they never really caught on with fans the way that other Marvel characters (such as Spider-Man and Fantastic Four) did. The X-Men title was cancelled with issue #66 and went into reprints until Marvel decided to try again and brought them back in issue #94, which features Gil Kane's now-classic cover.

It is sadly ironic that 25 years after helping to successfully return the X-Men to comic books, Gil Kane did not live to see the fruits of his labors make it to the silver screen in this summer's 20th Century Fox blockbuster movie due out in theatres on July 14.

In closing, dear X-Men fanatics, when you are all settled into your seats and happily munching on popcorn at the 86 million dollar X-Men film starring Patrick Stewart and Halle Berry this summer, enjoy the first Hollywood appearances of Cyclops, Storm, and Wolverine, and remember… it was artist Gil Kane who inaugurated their return 25 years ago on the covers of Giant-Size X-Men #1 and X-Men #94.

Good-bye to you, Gil Kane, and thank you for sharing your talent. The gifts are never ending.

John Mlachnik, Minnesota

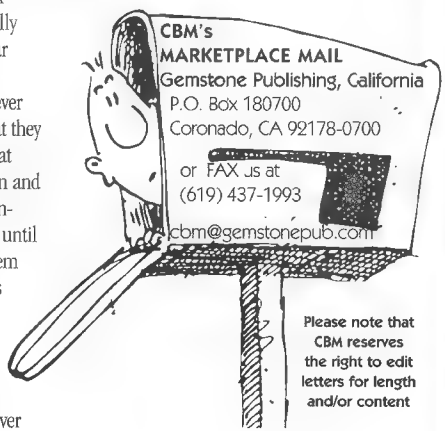
Valley of Tears

Had just finished reading CBM #74 when came the news of Gil Kane's passing. Well, it certainly sheds a peculiar, sad light over the wonderful job done in that issue. Sooner or later, other comic book legends are bound to leave this valley of tears; so let's hurry recording their invaluable knowledge about Golden and Silver Age days. The likes of Steve Ditko, Don Heck, Gene Colan, and so many others haven't been much interviewed in the past. It should be done while still possible.

J.C. Lebourdais, via E-mail

I totally agree. Every day that goes by I feel like we're behind schedule on this important task… and time is running out.

Thanks to everyone who took the time to write in this issue… your comments and questions are terrific! If you'd care to write, send communications to:



Sold.

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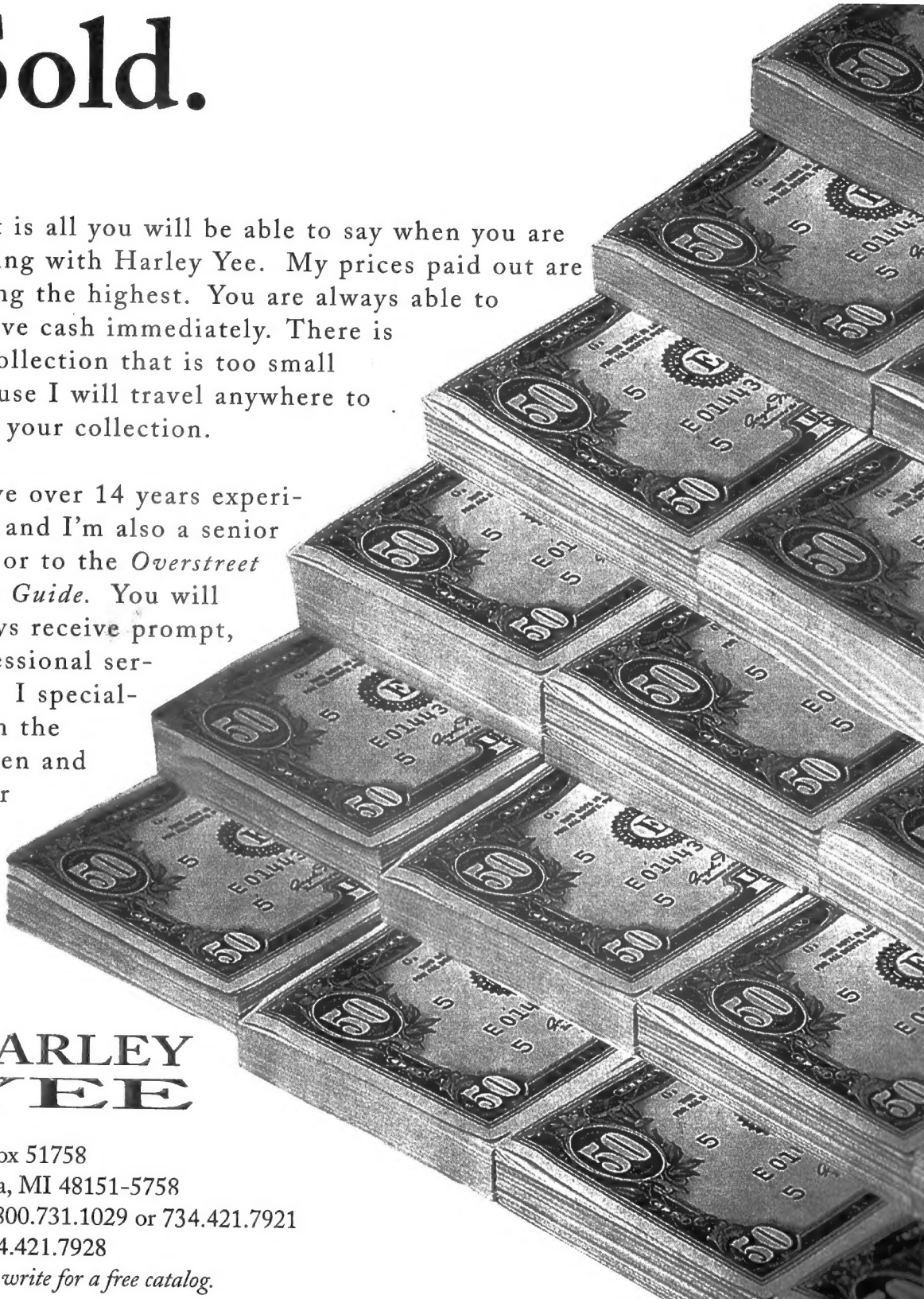

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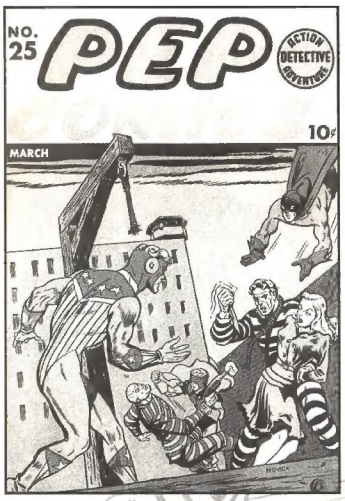

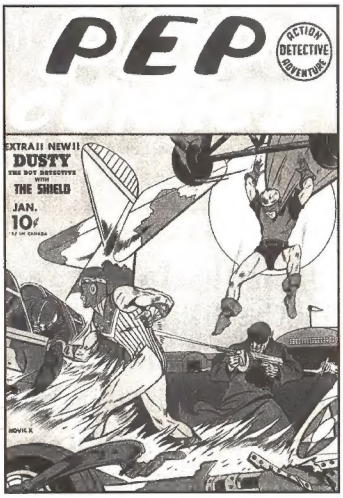

IRVING NOVICK... Illustrator of Icons!

It is impossible to separate the Golden Age comic book superheroes from World War II; the conflict and the patriotism gave a reason for being to many of the brightly-clad crusaders. In late 1939, a young artist named Irving Novick was asked to design a character whose look would capture the USA's fighting spirit. Novick took the red, white, and blue of Old Glory and fashioned it into a compelling costume, and the Shield, G-Man extraordinary, was born! Working with co-creator, writer Harry Shorten (who conceived the idea of the costume itself giving the hero power and invulnerability), Novick packaged the character with a cover and story for **Pep Comics** #1 (January 1940). Thus new comics publisher MLJ launched the first issue of their anthology title with the first star-spangled superhero.

Athough he was young, Irv Novick already had six years of professional illustration behind him. While still in art school at the age of 17, Irv got a job drawing pretty women using eggbeaters, potato peelers, and other kitchen devices; the manufacturing company used his work as displays in big department stores nationwide. Novick came into the comics field after answering a newspaper want-ad from Harry A. Chesler... whose "shop" provided comics material for several publishers. Soon after Chesler produced the contents of the first MLJ books, the publishers hired some of his art staff directly, including Irving Novick. As soon as they saw his designs for the Shield they knew they had a hit on their hands and a dependable artist to draw it.

MLJ went on to develop other superheroes, and it was Novick, who they wisely chose as their main cover artist, who drew many of their most memorable images. Of course—and such was the way of the Golden Age—it was a backup humor feature that eventually ensured MLJ's long-term success; it was Novick who suggested to creator Bob Montana that he approach the MLJ management with his Archie character. Novick worked for MLJ before the War, during the War (drawing comics while everyone else in the barracks played poker), and after the War, until they phased out everything but Archie. That's when Irv started his long association with DC Comics.

When DC began publishing war comics in the early 1950s. Irv was there, doing many covers and stories in early issues of **All American Men of War** and **Our Army at War**. The "All-American" title had finished a hero phase and a western phase; Irv was adding life to its third incarnation! And despite occasional bouts of dissatisfaction with the comics industry Novick knew that if he worked hard and well there, it would feed his family!

In the late 1960s, Irv became a mainstay on Batman and later drew a lot of Superman material as well. DC treated him right with a full employee package and generous benefits, and he treated them right by maintaining their two top properties. He carried on this work all through the Bronze Age, a noteworthy ending to a long and varied career. Irv's art is always enjoyable, clean, and dramatic with excellent anatomy and design.

– Pat Calhoun on Irv Novick, Wonder Con, April 18, 1999

BACKGROUND IMAGE OF THE VIKING PRINCE © DC

Irv Novick MLJ Classics

The following Novick **Pep** covers are conclusive evidence that Irv was both a pioneer and a supreme superhero cover artist... and that his work on the Shield made that character one of the standouts of the World War II era.

FACING PAGE: A trio of Golden Age Novick masterpieces (left to right): **Pep** #25 (Mar 1943), **Pep** #12 (Feb 1941), and **Pep** #11 (Jan 1941). All three are examples of Novick's scene-setting mastery... from the overall design, right down to the signature!

MLJ was one of the first publishers to have their superheroes wage war against the Nazis, and Novick's Shield grew in stature as he took on this infamous axis enemy. The bomb-dropping planes on the cover of **Pep** #3 (Apr 1940, Larson Copy, below), which hit the stands 10 months before Pearl Harbor, is clearly marked with swastikas. Novick's image of the Shield, sinking enemy ships by hurling the deadly spheres to new targets, is both visually compelling and a strong political message.

Enemy tanks attack the U.S. Capitol on **Pep** #4 (May 1940, New Hampshire copy) only to be decimated by red-white-and-blue on a rampage. Novick's brilliant cover design takes the action down to one-on-one as the Shield swings a roundhouse right at a Nazi soldier... while machine gun bullets symbolically bounce off his patriotic super suit.

ALL COVERS © MLJ

The cover of **Pep** #9 (Nov 1940, Hawkeye Copy, above left) features another finely-realized Shield super-stunt done with Novick's trademark action and heroic demeanor. At right, the Shield smashes into a scene of nightmare depravity and sexual menace on **Pep** #8 (Sep 1940, Allentown Copy). Here, Novick's gift for characterization and his portrayal of grim determination on the hero's face make this cover something special... and pure Golden Age gold!

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IMAGE ON COVER ©ATLAS-SEABOARD